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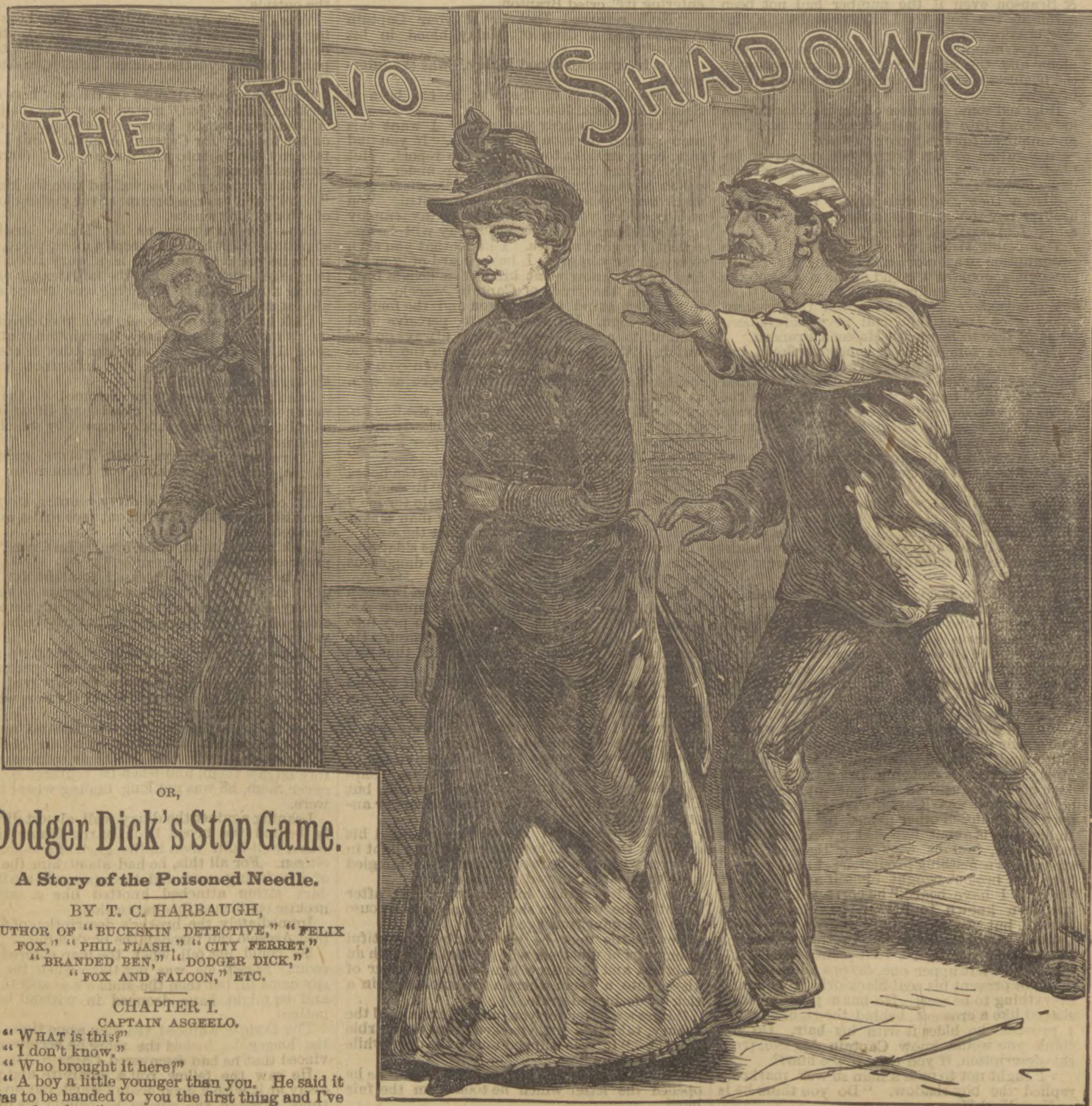
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THE TWO SHADOWS

OR,

Dodger Dick's Stop Game.

A Story of the Poisoned Needle.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH,

AUTHOR OF "BUCKSKIN DETECTIVE," "FELIX
FOX," "PHIL FLASH," "CITY FERRET,"
"BRANDED BEN," "DODGER DICK,"
"FOX AND FALCON," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN ASGEELO.

"What is this?"

"I don't know."

"Who brought it here?"

"A boy a little younger than you. He said it
was to be handed to you the first thing and I've
obeyed orders."

"Well, we'll see what it means, for I don't

THE LITHE, PANTHER-LIKE FIGURE WHICH HAD FOLLOWED THE GIRL SHADOW FROM
DODGER DICK'S HOME WAS NOW CLOSE BEHIND HER.

believe in many preliminaries," and the speaker, a good-looking robust boy of perhaps seventeen, tore open the envelope and drew out a slip of paper.

He was watched by a woman past fifty and neatly dressed.

"I am requested to call at the private office of Bangs & Branson, private brokers, No—Broad street," suddenly remarked the boy, looking up and catching the woman's eye.

"Who wants to see you?" she asked.

"I cannot tell. This note is signed by Massena Branson, the junior member of the firm."

"I hope this is not the beginning of another dangerous case."

"Of course I cannot tell, Mamma Sturgeon," smiled the boy. "I shall go over and see what Mr. Branson wants. I am at a loss to know how he ever heard of me—"

"That's not difficult of solution. Nearly everybody has heard of Dodger Dick, the sharpest detective of New York. You are more noted than you think you are, Dick, and you've made some enemies I would not like to have."

The boy said nothing in reply, but returned the letter to its envelope and placed both in an inner pocket.

"I have more than an hour to spare," remarked he, glancing at the clock ticking away on the mantle. "I could go straight to Bangs & Branson even if the number had not been given in the note for I have passed their window a score of times."

A few minutes more the old lady was quite alone and the active youth was on his way to the business house of Bangs & Branson, private brokers.

It lacked some minutes of three o'clock when he walked into the business office of the firm and inquired for the junior partner.

At mention of Mr. Branson's name a man behind the walnut counter dropped a paper and came forward.

"I am that gentleman, and I presume you are the boy to whom I sent the message," he remarked, eying Dick, sharply.

The young detective acknowledged that his presumption was correct, and he was passed through a door at the end of the room into the private office of the firm.

While Dodger Dick had passed the brokers' stand often enough, he had never before been brought face to face with Massena Branson.

He found him to be a somewhat florid, but good looking man of fifty. There was a certain nervousness about him which the boy noticed from the first, but as it seemed to leave the broker when he had passed into the private office, Dick thought it might have been occasioned by his call.

"You are Dick, the young detective?" opened the broker, when the two had taken seats in the elegantly-furnished office.

"I am called that, sometimes," admitted Dick.

"Pretty often, I think," smiled Branson.

"But, never mind that. I have sent for you to give you a little employment if you have nothing pressing on hand just now, as I trust you have not."

"Nothing," echoed Dick, leaning back in his chair and studying the man again.

"I want to know, in the first place, whether a certain person is in New York at this time," continued the Broad street broker. "In order to strike his trail you may have to peep into places considered dangerous, but I suppose you've done that often in the pursuit of your calling?"

"Quite often, Mr. Branson," answered Dick.

"I will not now go into details why I want to know something of the whereabouts of this certain man," resumed Branson. "He is called a Malay, but he is not full blood, as there is a dash of Portuguese in his make-up. At home he is known as Captain Asgeelo, but he may have a dozen other names, for that matter. In height he is about five feet seven, as straight as a palm, and as wiry as a tiger-cat. His strength is something prodigious. I have seen—"

here the broker caught himself and looked at Dick. "I have heard," he corrected, "that he has been known to lift an ox clear of the ground, but we have nothing to do with that. Captain Asgeelo looks barely thirty, but he must be ten years past that point. One of his eyelids, the left upper one, droops a little, but it does not prevent his coal-black orbs from seeing everything to be seen. He has a peculiar scar, shaped like a crescent, behind the right ear, but I presume he hides it with his hair. Do you think you would know Captain Asgeelo, from this description, if you were to see him?"

"I ought not to miss a man so well marked," replied the boy shadow. "Do you think he is in New York?"

The broker gave one of his nervous starts, and glanced swiftly toward a desk at one side of the room.

"I—I have good reason to think he is," he responded. "Birds of a feather flock together, you know, and I suppose that he has found his kind."

"You mean, then, that Captain Asgeelo has found the Malay colony that infests this city?"

Without replying, Mr. Branson took a card from his pocket and handed it to Dick, as if it were answer enough.

The boy detective leaned toward the light and read the following:

"NICHOLAS DE LA CRUZE.

English, French, Spanish, Danish, Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, and Malay spoken.

MANILA SEAMEN'S BOARDING-HOUSE."

"That's rather profuse," smiled Dodger Dick, looking up. "The place is a regular Babel sometimes."

"You know it, then?" exclaimed the broker.

"I am slightly acquainted with the old Malay and the place he keeps. Saint Nicholas, as he is sometimes called, is the king of the Malays in New York, and he presides over a very peculiar and a dangerous kingdom."

"But not too dangerous to prevent you from entering it?" cried Branson.

"No," returned Dick. "If your Captain Asgeelo has a drop of Malay blood in his veins—"

"He is a quarter-blood Malay," was the interruption.

"Then, if he is in the city, he has been to Saint Nick's establishment."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I want this man spotted as soon as possible. If you find him, come straight to me with the report. But I would like for you to discover under what colors he is sailing now, who his associates are, and where he can be found when wanted. You will consider yourself entirely in my employ until discharged by me. The pay will be excellent for good service. I know that you earn every dollar you get. I have heard of you before, and I know what kind of a beagle I am putting on the track of Captain Asgeelo. Nothing must stand between you and the finding of that man. He is quick to perceive and prompt to act. I believe he is always on the watch. Well, he ought to be, from the life he has led. Now, I think I have given you the scent. Run down the game and report as soon as possible."

"I will do the best I can," was the boy detective's response. "You have already interested me in the hunt you have proposed. I go at once, Mr. Branson."

"Good! You are not disappointing the hopes I had raised," the broker smiled. "Remember that you are to find Captain Asgeelo for me." And again the Broad street money man sent a swift glance toward the desk against the wall.

A minute more the boy stood on the sidewalk, with a new, and, he believed, very dangerous undertaking before him.

He was puzzled to know why Massena Branson was so anxious to find the Malay, Captain Asgeelo, but he was not the person to pry into what he believed was a profound secret. He had a simple mission before him, and that was enough.

"Maybe the skein will unravel itself by and by," reflected Dick, starting off. "I am now booked for the paradise of the Malays in America. I wonder where Mr. Branson got that curious card of old La Cruze's? He is the last man I would suspect of having anything of the kind. The whole thing is mysterious. Captain Asgeelo, eh? That is Malay enough, but I'm likely to find my yellow tiger-cat under another name, if I find him at all."

Meantime Massena Branson had vacated his office for the day. There was a satisfied light in his eyes when he crossed its step and mingled with the bustling crowds on the street.

An "L" car took him up-town, and after alighting he walked a short distance to a house with an elegant frontage.

Beyond the door he was met by a beautiful young girl of nineteen, who greeted him with an embrace, and then drew him, with a shower of kisses, into a room where a fire smoldered in a rich old-fashioned grate.

"Here's a letter for you, papa," exclaimed the beauty, taking a little packet from the marble mantle. "It was slipped under the door while I was up-stairs."

Massena Branson grew suddenly pale as he opened the letter which he took from the fair hand.

One glance at its contents seemed enough, for he uttered a cry of pain, started from the chair, and threw the missive, now crushed in his grasp, into the grate, where it was consumed in a moment.

Then he reeled back into his chair, gave the horrified girl one look, and fainted!

CHAPTER II.

DICK IN MALAYSIA.

BENT on opening his new trail in good shape, Dodger Dick pursued his way to the Malay quarter of New York.

He knew something about the race to which Captain Asgeelo was said to belong, for once or twice before he had crossed the threshold of the house he was about to visit and had seen the exceedingly mixed population there.

But now the place had become dangerous territory for him for he was looking for a man who would be on the alert, and if he had guessed correctly, from Massena Branson's manner, Captain Asgeelo was one to be watched.

Dick was aware that the New York Malays make their headquarters in Baxter street, near Bayard, and in the sailors' district in Water and Cherry streets. The ground was quite familiar to him, and when, after a considerable journey, he stood in front of Nicholas De La Cruze's place, he watched the trap awhile from the outside.

Was Captain Asgeelo in there? Was he waiting for him as the spy of the Broad street broker? And would he be pounced upon by a pair of Malay eyes the moment he stepped across the threshold?

"I might have stopped on the way here and picked up Tony Ted," mused the young shadow. "Then there would have been two pair of eyes on the lookout for Captain Asgeelo. But I can take my double into the game yet if circumstances demand it."

Without more ado he walked into the Malay "hotel" and at once became enveloped in clouds of strong cigar smoke.

Senor De La Cruze, as the Malay landlord sometimes calls himself, keeps a queer place, for there he yet holds out. It is a very Babel for languages, and when all the inmates are chattering at once, as is often the case, the noise is almost enough to set one wild.

Dick had Captain Asgeelo well photographed on his mind by the broker's description, but for several minutes after entering the house he could see nothing but a few indistinct forms through the smoke.

Gradually he became accustomed to the annoyance, and when the cloud had lifted sufficiently, he saw the motley crowd by which he was surrounded.

There were Malays, half Malays, quarter bloods, and a sprinkling of Chinese in the room.

At one end, behind a dirty counter, stood a smallish man with a puffed out face and a queer countenance.

Dick knew him at once for De La Cruze, the proprietor of that "paradise."

"The old fellow is pleased to-night, for he's got a good crowd," thought the spy as he again surveyed the various groups. "I don't see anything of Captain Asgeelo yet, but maybe he has yet to come in."

Dick's entrance did not seem to excite any suspicion, and in a little while he was ensconced in one corner, from whence he surveyed the Malay's guests and listened to the chatter, which resembled a magpie convention.

All at once the boy spotter became aware that he had been singled out by a pair of dark and piercing eyes. He felt their influence before he saw them, and when he ventured to discover them, he was not long finding where they were.

Leaning against the dingy wall, almost directly behind the broad back of the Malay king, was a well-built man in the garb of a common citizen. For all this, he had about him the air of a seafaring man, and the open collar with a dark string attached knotted like a sailor's necktie confirmed this impression.

Immediately the broker's description of Captain Asgeelo ran through the boy's mind.

He could not tell when the man entered the room. Surely he was not there when the boy spy came in, but then the smoke was still thick, and he might have dropped in without being noticed.

The Dodger watched the man some time, and the longer he looked the more he became convinced that he had discovered Captain Asgeelo.

He saw the fellow roll a cigarette and puff away at it with a good deal of spirit, but several times through the smoke he caught his black

eyes that seemed to shine like diamonds in their sockets.

At last Dick's man threw his cigarette away and disappeared through a door at the end of the room.

The boy waited ten minutes, but the guest did not come back.

"If that was Captain Asgeelo, I have spotted him soon," he murmured. "That is not enough, however. I was to discover with whom he associates, and what he is doing in New York. Massena Branson appears to be deeply interested in the captain, and I confess that I am interested in both."

Quitting his place, Dick went over to the proprietor of the resort and found him drumming on the counter with his knuckles for want of something better to do.

"Hello, boy!" exclaimed Saint Nick, in fair English.

Dick exchanged salutations, and then proceeded:

"I'm looking for a friend of mine—"

"Are, eh?" broke in the Malay. "This no American house, this Manila."

"Yes, yes," assented Dick. "My friends often come here. I am hunting Captain Asgeelo."

He thought he saw the Malay start but was not certain.

De La Cruze shook his head till his curls touched.

"No Cap'n Asgeelo here," he answered in rather louder tones than Dick liked. "I no know him, boy. What he like, eh?"

"Oh, well, if you don't know him, I needn't go to the trouble to describe him," was the reply. "I thought I saw a man who looked like him smoking just behind you a while ago."

"That man, hey?" cried the Malay landlord, throwing a look in that direction. "That was Cap'n Mingo."

"Oh!" ejaculated Dick elevating his head. "I thought he looked like the friend I am hunting. Captain Mingo, eh?"

"Yes."

"Does he board here?"

"Sometimes," answered the Malay. "Cap'n Asgeelo, whoever he is, no come here. He keep 'way if he come to New York," and the fat knuckles began to drum on the counter again.

There was a strange, far-away look in the Malay's eyes while he talked, which Dodger Dick noticed, because his suspicions had been aroused from the first.

"The old rascal knows more than he lets on," thought the young detective. "There isn't a drop of Malay blood in New York but what he knows where it is. The chances are that I have seen Captain Asgeelo to-night. Branson said he would be sailing under new colors, and who can say that he is not under the flag of Captain Mingo?"

As there was nothing more for him in the house the Dodger concluded to withdraw, an act which he thought he effected in good style.

He could see that the eyes of the Malay proprietor followed him to the door, and even when he was on the sidewalk breathing the night air again he seemed to be under their influence.

Dick wished he could have followed the man called Captain Mingo by De La Cruze. He was almost certain that he had found Asgeelo, and also that the Malay king of New York knew as much.

He dared not, as a matter of course, attempt to pursue his quarry further into the house. He knew he would have been stopped at the door, and an ejection and exposure would have followed.

If he could have carried out his wishes, he would have seen Captain Mingo go up a narrow stair two steps at a time. He would have followed him into a room where four men sat gambling at a small table, hardly large enough to accommodate two.

They raised their eyes the moment the door opened, and when they saw Captain Mingo's countenance, they held their cards back and stared at him.

He came up to the table and touched it with both hands as he leaned forward, his dark eyes snapping, and his yellowish face wreathed in smiles.

"A fox—a little fox—is on the trail," was what he said. "I've dealt with these foxes before, and I know them the moment they catch my eye."

"Where is he?" demanded one of the men, laying down his "hand," and his venomous eyes scintillating like those of a cobra.

"Down below."

"No more cards, boys, till I've seen this fox!" was the ejaculation. "There's too much at

stake in the game to let a young fox smell us out. The captain knows a spy when he sees one, so I must spot him."

And pushing his chair back, he arose. His example was followed by his companions, for all sprung up.

"Don't all rush down at once," enjoined the man called Captain Mingo, with a restraining gesture. "We want to discover if the boy comes from *him*. Having found *that* out, we'll proceed to clear the trail. Two of you go out by the back stair. Muffet and Mylo will go with me."

Instantly there was a division of the party, two vanishing through one door, and Captain Mingo and two others departing by another.

A minute more the same eyes which Dick had singled out came back into the same room, but a searching glance told their owner that "the young fox" had fled.

He was followed into the room by his companions, but his glance told them that he had lost the boy.

"Boy looking for you or some one else," and the Malay proprietor touched Captain Mingo's sleeve.

"For me, eh?" asked the captain, feigning astonishment. "Did he ask for Captain Mingo?"

De La Cruze shook his head.

"No; he asked for Cap'n Asgeelo."

"Eh?" cried the other, and a sudden smile appeared at the corners of his sinister mouth. "What did you tell him, Senor Nick?"

"I know no such man. I told 'im so, and he went away."

Captain Mingo looked at his two companions and went back into the house followed by his friends.

"I was right," he whispered to the men. "The boy I saw here a while ago was a spy. As he was looking for Captain Asgeelo, he must be in *some* one's employ. There are five of us against him, and we ought to succeed. We must run the fox down. Come!" his eyes flashed. "If the American has hired a spy, woe to him from this moment!" And Captain Mingo led the two men straight through the house to the street where they were joined by the pair that had preceded them.

CHAPTER III.

MADGE MYSTERY.

It was by a lucky chance that Dodger Dick was permitted to move away from the Malay den without having some shrewd watchers at his heels.

If he had tarried on the sidewalk a few moments longer he would have been seen by two of the five men, and probably caught or run down, and possibly stricken down right there—as men often are in that bad locality.

As it was, fortune favored him again as she had on former occasions, and he got out of the reach of Captain Mingo and his men.

Instead of going to Massena Branson's up-town residence or to his own quarters with his foster mother, Mother Sturgeon, the young detective crossed the lower part of the city and jerked a bell alongside a very common looking door.

This summons was promptly responded to and he was admitted by a young girl who started slightly on seeing him.

She was not over sixteen in looks, and the dim light in the hall showed that she possessed a good figure, and a pair of bright, penetrating eyes.

"You don't come often, any more. Have you forgotten your friends in this part of the city?" laughed the young portress. "I have been out myself," she added, "and if you had come a little sooner you might have rung till you were tired."

The young girl rattled on in this manner until she had conducted Dick to a room at the end of the corridor when she stepped toward him suddenly and laid her hand on his arm.

"What were you doing down in Malaysia?" she asked.

The boy detective gave her a quick look which exhibited his surprise.

"How do you know where I've been, Madge?"

The girl laughed again.

"Looking around is my profession. You know that," she as quickly responded.

"If you know I've been in Malaysia, you were there yourself," he retorted.

"I confess."

"Then perhaps I ought to ask what *you* were doing there!"

The girl watched him in silence for a few moments.

"Before I answer, do you want Tony Ted?" she asked.

"I dropped in to see if he was here."

"He is not. He went away several days ago—out of the city—and will not be back for some time."

"Is he on a trail?"

"A sort of one," was the reply.

"Very well; you need not tell me more, Madge. Go back to your trip to Malaydom."

"It won't take me long to tell the story," the girl answered. "I am on a trail which I fear is too much for me. If I should want help, what?"

"That depends. I may be on duty myself."

"Ha, ha! you *are*!" cried the maiden. "You don't go to Nicholas De La Cruze's place for nothing. Were you looking for the Malay captain—the captain of the Palm-Leaf, eh?"

If a rocket had dropped, still blazing, at Dick's feet, he would not have been more astonished.

"The—Malay—captain?" he then stammered. "What do you know of him, Madge?"

"Not very much yet, but a good deal by and by, maybe," was the answer. "I'd bet my head almost that I can guess who has set you on the captain's trail. Would it surprise you to learn that we are to be paid out of the same treasury?"

The boy shadow's amazement increased.

"Let me pull down the barriers, Dick," she went on. "Let Madge Mystery tell you what she knows, and just why she went down among the queer bloods to-night."

"Go on."

"Three days ago there came to me a mysterious letter, which was like a thunderbolt from a clear sky. It was addressed to 'Madge Mystery, Number 896 W— street,' which is right here, you know. I was still more surprised after reading the letter, for it asked me to call at the house of one of the best-known and richest brokers in New York. I knew it was not from the broker himself—the writing was against a thought of that kind—and full of curiosity, I went."

"When I was ushered into the elegant house, by the butler who opened the door, I was shown into a parlor where a young lady and the writer of the letter, as I knew at once, accosted me."

"She proceeded to tell me that she saw my name 'Madge Mystery' in a newspaper article on the 'Queer People of the City,' and as I was therein called a girl shadow, and as she wanted some information she sent for me. She then told me that her father had been annoyed by a mysterious man and mysterious letters—that he seemed to be the victim of a foul conspiracy which is slowly but surely sapping his happiness and his health. I listened with the deepest interest. I did not miss a single word."

"Although she could tell me a good deal about the merciless work of the mysterious man, she could throw no light on him—not enough, at least, to point him out with any certainty," continued Madge. "She once heard her father talking excitedly to himself in the library shortly after receiving one of the missives, and once or twice the words 'Captain Asgeelo,' 'hated Malay' and 'private' reached her ears. She told me all this without the slightest reserve, for she is a trustful girl whose whole soul is wrapped up in her father's welfare. At the end of her narrative she offered me a larger sum of money than I ever saw to find and ascertain all about this Captain Asgeelo, this 'hated Malay' as her father calls him. I promised to do my best, for the young lady enlisted my sympathies from the start. Besides, she is engaged to a young man whom she loves devotedly, but she says she will not become his bride until the mystery has been cleared up, and her father freed from the toils of his mysterious enemy. Now, Dick, don't you think I can guess what took you down into Malaysia inasmuch as I saw you come out of a certain building on Broad street to-day?"

"You saw me there, too," exclaimed the boy spotter. "Madge, I believe you are everywhere!"

"Oh, no; not quite so divisible as that," smiled the girl.

"I know you can guess the truth, so why keep it back? Massena Branson, the broker, sent me down among the Malays."

"Of course! And his daughter Bertha sent me to the same place."

"It is very strange, Madge," observed Dick.

"You did not obtain a description of the man you were to find. In that respect, I am ahead of you."

"Perhaps I found him all the same," insinu-

ated Madge. "So Massena Branson knows what his enemy looks like?"

"He described Captain Asgeelo at any rate. But, how deep into Malaysia did you get?"

"Beyond the shell," laughed the girl spotter. "I did not get into the smoker's paradise, as perhaps you did, where one finds all kinds of faces and blood; but I think I found a man who more than once in times gone by has answered to the name of Captain Asgeelo."

"You find out many secrets, Madge. But, what about the Palm-Leaf?"

"That was the name of a vessel once famous as a pirate in Malay waters," the girl explained. "Was Captain Asgeelo her commander?"

"We may get at that by and by, Dick—that is if you and I can agree to hunt the same trail."

"Why not?" demanded the Dodger. "Our quarry is the same. You hunt Captain Asgeelo for the daughter—I for the father. From what I saw of the man I take to be the pirate, I think we ought to combine."

"He's a Malay tiger, is he?" smiled Madge.

"Branson called him a tiger-cat during our talk."

"Then we unite," and the girl put out her hand, which was promptly grasped by Dick. "Let me tell you that Massena Branson has a terrible enemy in this mysterious man, whoever he is. Bertha feels his power. He holds some secret against her father which if divulged, would drive him swift to ruin. Last week Bertha picked up, on the hearth in the library, the fragment of one of the mysterious letters. She did not tell me what it said, but she implored me anew to find this Asgeelo for her and to find him soon."

"Does she want to see him in person?" asked Dick.

"I do not know. The beautiful girl is desperate. The hated and much-dreaded Malay holds her happiness and her fate in his hands as well as her father's peace of mind. We must find this game for certain. If he is the once captain of the Palm-Leaf, we have a heartless and most dangerous wretch to deal with. Does Massena Branson want to meet him?"

"I should say not, from what I gathered in our interview," responded Dick. "He wants to know, first, whether Captain Asgeelo is in New York, and, if he is here, with whom he associates."

"After that, what?"

"I don't know."

"I think I could enlighten Branson the broker," remarked Madge. "But I am not in his employ."

"What will you report to Bertha?"

"Nothing yet."

"You want to know more first?"

"Yes."

"So do I. The man whom I took for the Malay at St. Nicholas to-night is known as—"

"Let me finish," and Madge Mystery leaned toward Dodger Dick. "As Captain Mingo."

"That is my discovery," admitted Dick. "Now that we think we have found Branson's secret foe, let us follow the trail of the puzzle. It may be a dangerous one, for these Portuguese Malays are the king-cats of malice and ferocity."

The maid did not reply, but crossed the room to a bureau, a drawer of which she unlocked.

When she came back she handed Dick an old-fashioned daguerreotype, in a gilt frame.

"Where did you get this?" he queried.

"Captain Mingo lost it last night!" was the reply.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LETTER AND THE TRAP.

THE portrait which the Dodger held in his hand was that of a young girl not more than ten years old.

The face was one of rare childish sweetness, and a profusion of glossy curls made for it a frame of bewitching beauty.

For several moments the boy spotter looked at it with much interest.

An upward glance would have told him that the eyes of the girl were fastened upon him, but he did not look up till he had studied the daguerreotype to his satisfaction.

"Captain Mingo lost this, you say?" he asked.

"He lost it," she declared, with a smile.

"Do you know whose picture it is?"

Madge Mystery shook her head.

"Does it resemble any one whom you have ever seen?"

"Yes," and she took the picture from Dick's hands, and gazed intently on it a few seconds.

"I know one who has the same soft eyes, and the same glossy hair," she went on. "Of course

she is much older than the person represented here; but then the resemblance is remarkable."

"To whom do you refer, Madge?"

"Bertha Branson."

"What!" cried the boy spotter. "You think this the portrait of the Broad street broker's daughter?"

"You have never seen her, Dick."

"That is true, therefore you are more able to pass judgment than I am. If the portrait represents Bertha Branson, in her childhood, then we have found Captain Asgeelo!"

"So we have, but we know nothing yet about the secret he holds over the broker's head."

"Nothing; only that it is a dangerous one. Keep the picture, Madge. It may enter into the game by and by. Does Captain Asgeelo—I call him Captain Mingo no longer—does he know or suspect that this prize fell into your hands?"

"I think not."

"Where did he lose it?"

"In Malaysia."

As Madge did not appear very communicative on this point, Dick did not press the question, and the girl replaced the portrait in her bureau and put it under lock.

Half an hour later she was far from her humble lodgings and alone in a portion of the city occupied mainly by the wealthy.

The time was past the common bed hour, but there were still numerous people on the street, late comer-home, and very few of them saw the statue-like figure that hugged the trunk of a certain shade-tree while a pair of sharp eyes watched a certain elegant house a few feet away.

At length a gliding figure passed up the steps of the mansion to the door and stooped over the foot-rug.

The figure at the tree was the figure of Madge Mystery, and she saw the movements we have just described.

The person at the door did not remain there long, but rose soon from the rug, and flitted away with the same noiseless agility it had used in coming to the spot.

"The swing of Captain Mingo!" decided Madge, while she watched the figure. "He was at the door just long enough to leave another of those mysterious messages which are slowly blighting two lives."

She waited until the man had vanished, when she crossed the sidewalk and crept up the steps.

A moment more and Madge, the girl shadow, was feeling under the door with her slender fingers.

There was not much space for her to operate in, but she managed to touch a bit of paper which she succeeded in drawing to her by moistening her fingers, and the next second she had the nocturnal message.

There was triumph in Madge Mystery's eyes when she ran down the steps and hurried off in the direction taken by the man supposed to be the Malay.

If she had been seen at her task she might have fallen into the clutches of the police, not all of whom knew her, but, fortunately, she was not observed, and thus managed to escape with her prize.

The girl shadow retraced her way to the house where she had had her interview with Dodger Dick, and, once there, hastily ascended to her little room on the second floor and locked the door behind her.

"What have I found?" she exclaimed, drawing forth the message. "If it is nothing about the secret, it goes straight back to the door. If the man who left it was Captain Asgeelo, perhaps it were best that Mr. Branson knew nothing of the visit."

The prize drawn from under the door was inclosed in a small manila envelope, without superscription of any kind. This envelope was not sealed, so Madge lost no time in relieving it of its contents.

Her heart beat fast while she unfolded the paper and read the following:

"CAPTAIN LOUIS:—

"I have waited over my time. No answer. I give you ten more hours of grace. If the vow is not fulfilled against that time, I swear, by all that men consider holy, that the blow will fall with all its force. You can't play with Captain Asgeelo's secret. It is foolish for you to employ detectives. You must succumb, or go down. Remember!"

The three daggers standing in a row in place of the signature, kept Madge's attention for a moment.

"Captain Louis, eh?" she murmured. "Massena Branson is in no way mentioned here, but I found the written threat beneath his door."

So, unless he comes to terms inside of ten hours, the blow will fall! That means that Captain Asgeelo will strike. If he does, I pity the fair young creature on whose head the stroke will fall hardest. This must not be! The blow must be averted. This letter talks as if Branson were guilty of some crime. I don't care if he is. His child is innocent. The work of his enemy shall not sacrifice her! Where is Dick? I want his head a little while. I must find him if he is to be found."

Thrusting the letter into her bosom, she once more went out on the street, and never stopped her walk till she put her hand on a door at the head of a dark and narrow street.

In a moment the door was opened.

"Is Dick at home?" asked the girl.

"Not now."

"Where is he?"

"I can't tell you; but won't you come in?"

"No, thank you, Mamma Sturgeon," and the girl disappeared so quickly that Dodger Dick's foster-mother for some time afterward could not convince herself that she had not answered a knock in a dream.

On the street in front of the home of the boy Vidocq of New York, Madge paused and let the cool wind fan her cheeks for a while, for she was tired and worried, and the note in her bosom seemed to burn her flesh.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "Did the boy go back to the Malay den? Is he down there now, looking for Captain Asgeelo? He must be careful for, if I mistake not, the Malay has friends who serve him faithfully. If I had followed the man from Branson's house to night, I might know something I don't know now, but I considered the letter more important than that, and here I am with it in my possession."

Madge did not know that all this time the eyes of a dark-faced man were upon her, and when she started off she was followed by footsteps as soft as a panther's.

Madge reached the first corner undisturbed, but there she came under the espionage of a second pair of eyes as evil and as dark as the first.

The lithe, panther-like figure which had followed the girl shadow from Dodger Dick's home was now close behind her, and, at a signal which she did not see, the man on the watch at the corner reached her side with a few lithe bounds. Then the girl shadow felt a hand close on her arm, and, as she jerked back with a cry, the other arm was caught in the same manner.

Madge knew that she was in the hands of Captain Mingo's friends, even before a glance on either side revealed the faces of her captors.

"Silence, girl!" exclaimed one of the men, in low tones. "A still tongue is the safest for you just now! We don't want you for long. By and by you will be as free as the gull of the sea."

"You have no right to hold me," answered Madge. "I think I know why you have caught me."

"Perhaps, my girl," laughed the man. "Now let us see how quiet you can keep," and with a look and a nod at his companion, the two night-hawks started off with Madge Mystery a prisoner between them.

She was walked rapidly a long distance—long to her, for she was anxious to know what was to be done with her—and every now and then she took notice of the route.

"I am going back to Malaysia," she decided at last, with a smile; and, sure enough, the trip ended in a house in the heart of the Malay quarter.

Madge was led up-stairs and pushed into a room, the door of which was instantly locked behind her.

"Thanks!" she cried, when she was left alone. "You have given me time to breathe and think, Captain Asgeelo! Now, when you come to interview me, you will find me ready."

CHAPTER V.

A FRUITLESS QUEST.

MORE than an hour of silence and waiting followed Madge's entrance into the strange room.

At the end of a certain time she heard a foot-step beyond the door, and then, as it opened, letting in some light, she found herself face to face with a man.

This person, who lighted a gas-burner near the wall after he shut the door, was a person slightly above the medium height. He looked younger than he was, and for several seconds Madge was under the spell of his intensely-black eyes before a word was spoken.

"What are you doing here?" the man asked,

rather abruptly, advancing toward the girl shadow and stopping as suddenly in front of her.

"You ought to know without asking me," was the retort. "I came to this house in the hands of two men. They brought me against my will."

"Against your will, eh?" laughed the man. "I don't quite understand that. Why didn't you call for the police?"

"I was warned that I would be severely dealt with if I opened my mouth."

"Do you know me?" he asked.

Yes, Madge knew him, but did not deem it safe to acknowledge it just then. She knew that the man was Captain Mingo, if not Captain Asgeelo, but she kept silence.

"I asked if you know me?" repeated the yellow-faced man leaning forward and clutching Madge's arm.

"I may have seen you before."

"Is that all?" responded Captain Mingo, for he it was. "You mean that you have dogged me, don't you?" and his look became fiendish. "Don't you know, girl, that I'm the last man you want to shadow in this city?"

"You make a very bold statement," returned Madge, unabashed. "I don't see why I should shadow you!"

"Don't, hey? Well, we'll see."

He stepped to the door, turned the key, and, opening the door, he looked into the hall and called "Una!"

He was answered by a quick step on the outside, and, as he drew back, a woman came into the room.

She looked first at Madge and then at the man who had summoned her.

"See what she has, Una," commanded Captain Mingo, pointing at the girl shadow. "Don't let anything escape your eye. Knock on the door when you are through."

He then turned and walked out before Madge could speak again, and when the door shut with a bang the girl detective was in the hands of the woman.

While Una evidently had Malay blood in her veins, she was not a genuine native of Malaysia. She showed her mixed lineage, and when Madge looked into her face she knew that she would carry out Captain Mingo's commands to the letter.

The searching process began immediately after Captain Mingo's departure.

Madge saw that resistance would avail her nothing, and while she did not submit to the indignity with the best of grace, she did not quarrel with Una.

"At any rate, I guess the letter is safe," she remarked to herself. "I cannot think that Captain Mingo suspects that I found the writing he slipped under the broker's door. I believe I am being searched for the daguerreotype he lost the other night. I am almost certain of it now," she added, after the search had proceeded a while.

Una's search was vigorous and complete. Every particle of the girl's clothing was submitted to a close inspection, and when the end was reached Madge breathed free again.

When Una stepped to the door and knocked according to Captain Mingo's orders, her face showed her disappointment.

"She has nothing with her," she reported, as the Malay came forward in response to the summons.

"Nothing?" and Captain Mingo threw a fierce glance toward Madge.

"Nothing," echoed the woman.

"Are you sure you made the search complete, Una?"

"I am sure."

"Very well." And then he looked at Madge again. "You will stay here for the present, young lady," he went on.

The girl's eyes lit up with indignation, and she stepped suddenly toward the Malay.

"You know that you have no right to keep me here!" she exclaimed.

"No right? Hear the street bird, Una. One would think she had the mayor of this city at her back. Yes, you will remain in the cage awhile. Come, Una; we will let our bird sing to herself again."

Madge was too eager to see her persecutors depart, to make the slightest effort toward detaining them, and when she was once more alone she burst into a light laugh.

"Una has good eyes, but they were not quite good enough," observed she. "I fancy Captain Mingo could have done better. So far I am still ahead, if I am cooped up in a strange house."

Just beyond the door Captain Mingo was

clutching Una's wrist, and leaning toward her was sending the intensity of his eyes straight into her.

"If you have failed, the fault rest on your head," he was saying, through clinched teeth.

"You are certain that nothing could have escaped your eyes, are you?"

"Why ask me that?" retorted the woman, with a show of resentment. "I am in your service, and I think I'm not the person to give your enemies a show. Of course I allowed nothing to escape my eyes. The search was well done, if I do say it myself."

"I accept the report." And Captain Mingo dropped the woman's wrist. "She is a spy, and I know it. She is called the Girl Shadow of New York, and she has fairly won the title. You know what I've lost since coming here the last time. Well, I had cause for believing that it had fallen into her hands, and I wanted no search that was not thorough. I left another letter to-night," he went on, getting new breath while the woman silently watched him. "If it doesn't bring him to terms, then by heavens! the blow falls."

"Are you sure you were not watched?" asked Una.

"Who would watch me?—the girl in there?" and Captain Mingo ended with a derisive laugh.

"I did not say so."

"No, but I followed your look. No, I was not watched. To-morrow morning the letter will fall into his hands, and he will know that the last hour of grace has been spoken."

"Yes. But what of the boy who came into De La Cruze's—the one who slipped through your fingers before you could hold him?"

"Oh, we'll catch that little spy in time."

"Do you think he is working with the girl?"

"I cannot say as yet, but it is likely that both are in his employ. What if they are, Una? He dare not disregard the letter he will find in the morning."

Captain Mingo dismissed the woman who disappeared in the darkness at the end of the hall while he went to another room where in a short time he was joined by a man who had the unmistakable look of the Portuguese-Malay.

"Well, Mylo?" asked the captain. What have you discovered?

The man addressed shook his head before he spoke.

"Nothing, Senor Cap'n," said he.

"Did you search the route thoroughly?"

"I did."

"I know what your answer implies. Your eyes are the keenest I ever saw, Mylo. They used to serve us better than a spy-glass when we were on the look-out. That will do, my man." And Mylo bowed and went out.

Captain Mingo threw himself upon a sofa that stood against the wall behind his chair and was soon asleep.

In a little while thereafter not a sound was heard in the house, and the nearest clocks in their towers struck the night out and the morning in.

Madge Mystery kept awake as long as she could, but sleep overpowered her at last and she did not see the light of the new day when it stole into the room and bathed her face in its beams.

Captain Mingo slept late.

His slumber was so deep that the footsteps of Una did not disturb him as they came into the room and stopped at his cot.

For some moments the woman stood there and looked down into the handsome yellow face pillowed on the sofa.

After awhile she stooped and awoke the Malay.

"Here is news," remarked Una, drawing from behind her a morning paper, fresh from the press.

Captain Mingo was on his feet in a second.

"What is it? Show me!" he cried, jerking the paper from Una's hands.

"Your finger is at the place. You—"

"I see!" and then Una drew back and watched his changes of color while he read a paragraph like this:

"LIGHTLY BETTER.—Latest advices from Massena Branson, the Broad street broker, who had a stroke of paralysis yesterday afternoon, tell of a slight improvement. But his physicians have no hopes of averting a speedy end."

The paper fell from Captain Mingo's hands, followed by a curse.

CHAPTER VI.

SIX TERRIBLE WORDS.

CAPTAIN MINGO was not the only person in New York that morning who was interested in

the paragraph concerning Massena Branson, the broker.

A sharp-eyed youth who borrowed a paper for a few moments of a newsboy whom he knew, saw the brief item and read it twice over before he caught second breath.

"Paralysis, eh?" ejaculated this youth. "I wonder if Captain Asgeelo's hand isn't in this affair? If he is half the rascal I hear he is, Branson has fallen into a demon's clutches. And the girl, Bertha, too! Won't marry, Madge says, as long as her father is under the spell. I'm going to see something about this thing. First, I'll stop in and see whether Madge discovered anything additional last night."

Dodger Dick called at the girl shadow's lodgings as he went up-town, but the landlady of the premises told him that Madge had not returned, and he was obliged to go away without an interview.

It was with some misgiving that the boy ferret rung the bell of Massena Branson's mansion.

He expected to be refused admittance by the butler, but when the door was opened, instead of that personage, he stood face to face with Bertha herself.

"How is your father now, miss?" inquired Dick, tipping his hat to the young girl, whose face was pale, and showed signs of a long vigil.

"A mite easier, perhaps," was the reply.

"Is it really paralysis? Don't you think—"

"Who are you?" broke in Bertha, catching Dick's arm before he could retreat even if he had intended to do so.

He smiled at her in a curious manner.

"Your father would recognize me," answered he.

Bertha looked at him steadily for a few moments.

"Are you the brother of Madge Mystery?" she asked.

"Not her brother, but her friend."

"Then you are one of the very people I would see. Come in if you please."

Dodger Dick was the last person to refuse an invitation of the kind, and a minute more he and Bertha were the tenants of a darkened parlor into which but faintly came the first morning noises of the street.

"No," she resumed, answering his inquiry at the door. "I don't call it paralysis, and I believe the doctors know it is not that. Father received a shock after his return from the office yesterday. It was a terrible one. If I had known the contents of the letter which threw him into a faint, he might not be in his present condition."

"A letter, was it?" queried the boy.

"Yes—a letter that had been put under the door."

"You did not see it after the stroke?"

"There was no letter after that. What remained of it was ashes in the grate, for father burned it before he fell. Has Madge told you that I have employed her?" quickly continued the girl. "What has she discovered?"

Dodger Dick began by shaking his head.

"Madge keeps her secrets pretty well," observed he. "She will report to you in due time. I am in your father's employ."

"In father's?" cried Bertha with a start, and she threw a hurried glance toward the hallway.

"What does he want you to do?"

"Can you not guess?" smiled Dick. "I am expected to discover Captain Asgeelo."

Bertha Branson uttered a slight cry.

"Ah! father wants to get at that man of power and mystery," she exclaimed. "He threatens us like the shadow of doom. I would like to know what his secret is."

"Captain Asgeelo's, miss?"

"Yes."

"Do you think he has one?"

"He must have," was the sudden reply. "If he has none why this terrible power over father—why the deadly work of the mysterious letters?"

"It looks like he has a secret," admitted Dick.

"Of course he has."

"Do you know what sort of blood flows through this Captain Asgeelo's veins?"

"Yes—Malay."

"How could your father become acquainted with a man of his stamp?"

"I don't know," replied Bertha slowly. "Stay! wait till I come back," and she vanished and went up a stair beyond the parlor door.

Dodger Dick waited a few moments and was rewarded by the girl's return.

"I heard the nurse calling me," she explained. "Father seems a little better, but is not

well enough to see you. You asked me how he could have become acquainted with a Malay, and perhaps a pirate at that?"

"I did, miss."

"Father has traveled much in his time. It was before he settled down here in New York. He once told me about the beauties of the tropic islands, but only once. He seemed to know everything about them and about the waters by which they are surrounded. He may have encountered Captain Asgeelo on his native heath, but of course I cannot say. I was but two years old when mother died, or at least father tells me so. I have grown up under his care, and the blow that affects him, crushes me. Our life was happy till this shadow fell across our path."

"When did it fall?"

"The first letter I knew anything about came about three months ago," answered Bertha.

"After that they came frequently. I believe that he received them at the office as well as here. Once, when I went down to him there, a man came out with a pair of eyes that seemed to look me through. And when I looked after him, surprised at his insolence, he had stopped on the sidewalk and was staring with all his might. I was so indignant that I asked father if he had many customers like that fellow, and he turned deadly pale."

"Do you think that man was Captain Asgeelo?" asked Dick.

"I knew nothing about him then," said the girl. "When I discovered that father's enemy bore that strange name and was a Malay, I became convinced that I had seen the arch-scurdrel himself. It was my first and last encounter with him; but now, powerful as he is, I would like to face him for a few moments."

Dodger Dick looked amazedly at the fair young girl who thus boldly proclaimed her desire to confront her father's merciless foe, armed as she feared him to be with a crushing secret.

"What would you do in Captain Asgeelo's presence, miss?" he asked.

"I would show him that the law can protect its citizens from the insults of an infamous enemy like him!" she cried, with spirit.

"Do you think he would desist? A man like Captain Asgeelo would not care a fig for your threats. Why has not your father set men—detectives—on the watch for the writer of the letters? He came to me but yesterday, and now he only wants to know whether the city holds a man sometimes called Asgeelo, and a Malay."

"What! do you think the secret held by that wretch is the secret of a crime?" exclaimed Bertha, flushing.

"Whatever it is, your father fears the man who holds it."

"Yes, yes."

"Did you ever hear him say that a daguerrotype taken when you were, say, ten years old, was missing?"

"I did," answered Bertha, quickly. "He told me once that it disappeared some years ago. How came you to know anything about it?"

"Don't think hard of it if I say 'never mind,' Miss Bertha," and the Dodger smiled. "I did not call for the purpose of reporting to your father. I wanted to find out how he was, and—to see you. I will be going now."

"But not till you assure me that you will find this enemy for me," was the response. "I trust I am not afraid of him. He has wounded me as deeply as he has the loved one up-stairs. I want vengeance for his work. I trust in you and the girl called Madge Mystery. I am glad you know one another."

"I'll do my best," and Dick looked into the pleading face of the girl as he spoke. "I would like to ask you one more question, though."

"Go on."

"You told Madge that one day you found a fragment of one of those mysterious letters?"

"I did."

Bertha's lips got very white as she spoke.

"You found something on the fragment—something that startled you?"

"Yes." And she lowered her voice as she leaned toward the boy detective, and laid one finger softly on his arm. "I believe you ought to know what that bit of paper contained. It might help you to keep the trail of Captain Asgeelo when you have struck it. I have breathed those words to no living creature since. They have burned their way into my brain, as it were. The undestroyed piece of the letter which I found was the close, and the sentence was this: 'Remember! your fortune or my wife!'"

The boy detective looked at Bertha, and saw that she was steadying herself at a chair while

she talked. There was not the vestige of color on her face, and the language which she repeated from the terrible letter seemed to take her breath.

"It is a strange sentence—a queer threat," spoke Dodger Dick when the words had died away.

"Yes," observed Bertha, "there is something terrible in it—'Remember! your fortune or my wife! Now, for the love of mercy, run this villain down. Find out what mean those words. Get at the secret—the hold this Malay tiger has on father. Go! go! they want me up-stairs again.' And the boy shadow of Gotham was almost pushed from the room."

"It is a terrible mystery sure enough," he thought to himself when he reached the street. "Now I shall not rest till I have gone to the bottom of it, and that despite the Malay and his four companions. He sha'n't blight the life of that girl back there. I won't let him!"

CHAPTER VII. THE FIVE M'S.

In a small room almost bare of furniture a man was pacing back and forth with rapid restless strides like those of a tiger fretfully pacing the floor of his cage.

He was batless and coatless, though the closing day was a cool one for November, and ever and anon he would throw expectant glances toward the door as if he was waiting for some one.

At length the sound of a footstep fell on his trained ear, he suddenly ceased his pacing, and seemed to hold his breath.

The next moment the door opened and the two men whose yellowish faces and peculiar eyes proclaimed them not of American nationality stood before him.

"Shut the door first, commanded the occupant of the room with an impatient gesture, and when he had been obeyed, he went on:

"Now open your packs. What have you in yours, Mylo?" and he singled out one of the men, who was as thin and wiry as a young shiek.

"I have watched the house all day."

"Well?"

"The rich American is still alive. One of the servants who came out told me that he is slowly getting better."

"Did he give an opinion?"

"He ventured to say, Senor Captain, that he thought his master would get well."

"Thought he would, did he," repeated the listener at which the spy bowed. "Well, we must put up with that for the present. Now, Muffet, what know you?"

Muffet was a little heavier-set than his brother spy; his skin was a trifle lighter, a difference caused by blood perhaps, but this difference did not make him any the less a villain.

"I have seen the boy spy," reported Muffet, grinning. "He seems to be looking for the girl. He has been twice to her house to-day."

"Twice, eh?"

"Twice."

"What is this young fox like, Muffet?"

The man gave a brief but striking description of Dodger Dick.

"The same boy I saw at the hotel!" ejaculated the listener, who was Captain Mingo. "So he looks for the girl shadow, hey? You did not attempt to stop him, Muffet?"

"I had no such orders, Senor Captain."

"Right! you had not. Do you think you could lay hands on this boy to-night?"

"I think I could."

"Then—Ah! Malo and Maxar!" and that moment the door opened again and two men bearing a close resemblance to the others stepped in.

"Cristo! we are all here!" smiled Captain Mingo, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "Now we can fix the trap that is to catch the American's paid fox. What have you to report, my keen eyes?"

The men called Malo and Maxar stepped forward and gave the peculiar salute used on ships that sail the Malaysian seas. It was returned by Captain Mingo, whose eyes got a sudden gleam as he delivered it.

"We don't know much, captain," reported Malo. "We have been watching all day, but we have not been rewarded. If the trap is to be set, we are here to play our part."

The sunlight came in at the little window on one side of the room and fell on the faces of the five foreigners thus grouped together. Captain Mingo was the tallest of the lot, but one or two of the others outweighed him.

"We caught foxes on the water, why not on land?" he suddenly exclaimed. "Those were times when we did not have to slip from spot to spot to gild our hands and to give us money. They will come again before long, my brave fellows. We will some day go back to the tracks we sailed in when we had a flag of our own making, and when we did not have to wait for an old man to get well."

An outburst of enthusiasm was the response, but Captain Mingo's uplifted hand promptly checked it.

Then for the next five minutes he talked rapidly. Now his sentences were interlarded with Portuguese, now he came back to English, only to fly off on native Malay, three languages which his audience seemed to understand perfectly.

"Now," said he, finishing and looking straight at the four men, "you know your duties. I have assigned you all. I work so that there can be no conflict, no failure. It shall never be said that a spy, and that spy a boy, baffled Captain Asgeelo."

He used this name for the first time, and he spoke it in a manner which told that he had spoken it before.

By this time the sunlight came in at the window no longer. Where it had touched the dingy wall was shadow, and true dinginess besides.

Hard upon Captain Asgeelo's finish the five men tramped from the apartment and at the end of the narrow corridor down which they filed, the leader touched the arm of Mylo and gave him a look the meaning of which he understood.

The other three went down the stairs and their footsteps were lost in the darkness, but Captain Asgeelo leaned against the wall, folded his arms and looked at his cat-like spy.

"Did you see her, Mylo?" he asked.

"Yes, captain."

"Ah! I thought you would not come away without a glimpse. Is she beautiful?"

"Very beautiful," grinned Mylo. "I saw her at the window, and I passed the house slowly and got a good look."

A smile overspread the Malay captain's face.

"The prize is worth playing for," he exclaimed. "I have waited for this time with chained patience. I have come from our old sailing grounds to grasp a fortune with each hand. Her face is worth her father's money to me, for when I call it mine, I get even for that old affront. You know, Mylo."

The wiry Malay bowed and gave another of his grins.

"I've given him ten hours more—ten hours only," Captain Asgeelo—or Mingo, as you like, reader—went on. "His sickness sha'n't interfere, it shall not extend the time another minute."

"When does it end?" queried Mylo.

The Malay chief took out an elegant watch set with diamonds.

"At seven to-night," he answered, looking up.

"If you have no reply, what?"

"Precisely at that hour his door-bell will ring and his servant will admit—Captain Asgeelo!"

Mylo seemed amazed at the cool audacity of the man who spoke.

"He may have the police in waiting," the spy suggested.

"Let him!" cried the Malay foe. "But he will not. No, not for all the wealth of New York would the American gold-bug attempt to arrest me in his own house, or to bar me out. He knows what I know; he knows that I am here because the time has arrived for him to fulfill his oath. I don't blame him for fighting shy of Captain Asgeelo. Mylo, when he took that vow he did not look far into the future; he did not see to-day. Ha! ha! the next time he will take no more oaths!"

It was a cold bitter laugh of triumph that came out over the laughter's lips. It seemed to startle Mylo from his statue like pose, and to send him back a foot.

"If the answer comes it will come here—down-stairs," continued Captain Asgeelo the Malay. "Now, Mylo, you will go to your duty. Don't fail me. Make a sure catch and, mind you, hold the prey."

Mylo tossed his head assuringly and his eyes glittered like a serpent's as he turned to go down the steps.

He was followed to the bottom by his companion, but the two men separated there, Captain Asgeelo whom we will follow proceeding to another room in the house.

Locking the door behind him, he went to a wardrobe and took therefrom a gentleman's suit of elegant apparel.

Then he made his toilet with nimble fingers in front of a somewhat dirty mirror, and when he had finished the transformation was surprising.

He no longer looked like the man whom we saw pacing the upper room minus coat and hat. Aside from his eyes which he could not change he did not resemble the person who had given orders in three languages to four dark-faced fellows. He was dressed like a gentleman.

"I think I look well enough to take in two fortunes," exclaimed the Malay, surveying himself for the last time in the glass. "My old friend may receive a slight shock, but then he will soon recover. I leave the four sea-cats to chase the troublesome sail to a finish while I play my best hand with the old-time grace of Captain Asgeelo. I long to stand face to face with the beauty under her father's roof. I am eager to look into his eyes and tell him that the vow must be fulfilled."

He drew on a pair of kids as a finishing touch to his toilet, and then tripped from the room and passed out into the street.

It was that period between the brief fall twilight and the lighting of the ten thousand lamps of New York.

Captain Asgeelo looked about him with his keen eyes, saw nobody whom he suspected, and then started off to play another part of his merciless game.

CHAPTER VIII. DICK'S TEN-STRIKE.

MEANTIME for a brief period let us return to Dodger Dick, whom we saw last descending the steps of Massena Branson's mansion, after his interview with Bertha.

The boy shadow was resolved to stick to his self-imposed vow that the yellow villain from Malaydom should not blight the career of the beautiful young girl who had fully enlisted his sympathies.

He had seen enough of Captain Asgeelo and had heard enough of him besides to feel that he was dealing with a man who would not scruple at the performance of the darkest deed, and if it was true, as Madge Mystery had told him, that the Malay had four yellow-skinned confederates, then, indeed, had he a herculean task on his hands.

But the boy ferret did not falter.

He went through the outskirts of the Malay quarter of New York after quitting the broker's house, and dodged into a small, dingy-looking frame building that seemed to be shunned by its neighbors.

He was met beyond the threshold by an old man, dwarfish in figure, but as lively in his movements as a cricket.

The little eyes this personage wore away back in his head snapped like live coals when they saw Dick, and he was welcomed in a queer admixture of English and some outlandish language.

"I want to see you, Moszeelo," said the boy, touching the old man's arm. "It is a long while since I've been here, but you don't look one whit older. By Jupiter! I believe you are renewing your youth."

The little old fellow smiled and patted the young Vidocq on the back as he led him into a room littered to some extent with shoemaker's tools.

If Dick had had with him a friend whom he wanted to introduce to the dwarf, he would have said:

"Here is a man who has been everywhere, who has seen every country in the world, and who knows nearly every person in it. He makes those fine shoes which the rich young ladies of New York are raving over just now, for he holds the secret of their wonderful gloss and springiness. Yes, this is the famous Moszeelo, with Malay blood in his veins."

But Dick was alone, and could only think thus.

He discovered this queer old man by accident some time before the opening of our present story, and more than once he had listened to the story of his wanderings and adventures.

Perhaps Moszeelo stretched it a little now and then, but Dick pretended not to doubt his most marvelous narrative, and a strong friendship had grown up between the two.

"I never thought I would have any practical use for the old fellow," thought the boy, when he had taken the one chair visible in the shoe-shop. "But now I am going to make him serve me, if I can."

Thereupon he began, just as soon as Moszeelo paused in his praise of a pair of shoes which he was finishing for a woman supposed to be worth several millions in money. In the old fellow's

eyes, by the way, all his customers were immensely rich.

"Moszeelo, I want to know something about your own country to-night," remarked the boy shadow.

"About Malaysia?" ejaculated the old man.

"Yes; but nothing about its wonderful forests and its beautiful birds. You have told me about them before. I want other information now."

Dick had never told Moszeelo that he was a young detective, and the Malay had never suspected anything of the kind.

"Let the young American go on," said the old man.

"When did you leave your native island the last time?" asked Dick.

Moszeelo reflected a moment, and then counted his long fingers.

"It was eighteen years ago," he at length answered.

"Did you ever hear of a man named Captain Asgeelo?"

The boy spotter of New York was coming to the work at once.

"Captain Asgeelo?" repeated the dwarf, and Dick thought his eyes seemed to flash. "Where did you ever hear of him, boy?"

"Never mind. You may discover some other time, Moszeelo," was the reply. "Besides, I am questioning you just now. You are the witness. Don't you see?"

The shoemaker fell back and laughed.

All at once his face grew serious and catching one of his sleeves he jerked it up and leaning forward again displayed to the boy's gaze an arm almost as dark as old parchment and bare to the shoulder.

"Don't I know Captain Asgeelo?" he went on, speaking now through clinched teeth. "See, my young senor! He left his mark as I came away from Malaysia."

Dick was already looking at an old scar on the arm above the elbow—the proof of a wound which at one time must have been a frightful spectacle.

"Did Captain Asgeelo make that?" cried Dick.

"The pirate king whose floating palace and slaughter-house was the ship *Palm-Leaf*!" was the answer. "Yes, he gave this," and Moszeelo's eyes went back to the scar and rested there for a few moments with a tigerish glare.

"What does the young senor want to know of him? Is he near?"

Dick shook his head for reply to the last question.

"I want his history, Moszeelo. As you have encountered him in your time, I would like to know what he has done to make him famous."

"Eh? What has he not done?" cried the old Malay, and then he drew the sleeve back over the scar. "Captain Asgeelo is part Portuguese," he continued. "He is a man of secret crimes, and a hard customer to deal with if you want to buy a secret of him. He early became a bad man. In the Malay seas are pirate craft of every description—not so many now perhaps as there used to be. When I came away the waters swarmed with them, but the boldest and most merciless, young senor, was the *Palm Leaf*, commanded by this same Captain Asgeelo. Why, there is to-day a price for his head offered by three governments. The English want it for the burning of the *Victoria* and the murder of her captain, the Portuguese want it because he has disgraced the Portuguese part of himself, and the French seek it for the young French countess whom he drove mad by his cruelty."

"Yes," through his teeth again, "I know Captain Asgeelo! We were on the sea one night when a lot of Malay rats swarmed over our sides and had us before we could lift a hand in defense of ourselves. I ventured to upbraid Captain Asgeelo on his own deck, and got the scar you saw—from his cutlass. Now you know something of him. If the authorities of this city could get him they would do the world a service. But he will not venture here."

"When did you hear of him last?"

"Five years ago. A Malay dropped in here who said that he had left the sea and was living like a prince somewhere in Europe. He could do that, for his spoils I should think amounted to millions."

Dick seemed impatient for the old man to conclude.

"Now, did you ever hear of any American who was in any way connected with Captain Asgeelo, of none who were his prisoners at any time?"

"Yes, there was one."

The young detective gave a quick start.

"What about him, Moszeelo?"

"I don't know much. I heard once that in one of his cruises Captain Asgeelo captured a vessel on which were an American and his family consisting of wife and child, the latter a little girl but a few months old. The American, the story goes, was taken down into the pirate's cabin and there was made to take a terrible oath of some kind. No one knew what it was, and you may be sure that the American never told. The family was allowed to proceed, the rest of the people were transferred to another ship in the Malay's service. I have heard that afterward the American went back and fought under Captain Asgeelo's flag."

"You don't believe that part of the story, Moszeelo!" exclaimed Dodger Dick.

The old man shook his head doubtfully.

"Men do strange things sometimes," he smiled. "We do not know what kind of oath the American was forced to take."

Dick was silent a moment.

"Do you think we will ever know?" he suddenly asked the old man.

In an instant the shoemaker's eyes got a look which they had never had before in Dick's presence.

"You have a reason for wanting to know so much about Captain Asgeelo, and his history," he exclaimed, throwing the fine shoe from his lap.

"You can't deceive old Moszeelo long at a time, my young senor. You know something about the captain of the *Palm-Leaf*."

A smile came into life at the corners of the young detective's mouth.

"Yes, I know where he is and that is something," exclaimed he.

"Is he here?"

"He is here."

"And his oath-bound prisoner?"

"He is here, too, I am sure."

"What was the oath?"

"I think I know. I see into the mystery now further than I ever saw before. There! don't press me, Moszeelo. You have done me a great service, but I must keep my own counsel. You have given me a hold on this culture of the Malaysian seas who seeks his victims in New York. Now I can fight him understandingly. A thousand thanks, Moszeelo." And Dick broke from the old shoemaker's hands, and rushed from the room.

CHAPTER IX.

A BIRD ESCAPES.

THE night of her captivity in the unknown house was a long one to Madge Mystery, the girl detective of Gotham.

She was not again bothered by Captain Mingo after the strict search Una had carried out at his command.

When day came she was not released, but by and by the door was opened wide enough to admit of the entrance of a breakfast which the imprisoned girl did not hesitate to accept.

After that the house grew quiet again and Madge was left to her own reflections.

The message taken from beneath Massena Branson's door and which Una failed to find in her search, had been deftly concealed under the sole of one of Madge's shoes—the last place where the woman would have looked for anything valuable.

The girl shadow was anxious to escape. She remembered that the broker's enemy had given him ten hours of grace, and she saw them slipping away and she unable to lift a hand to prevent the stroke.

What would happen at the end of the ten hours? Would Branson's merciless foe deal a blow which would crush both him and his daughter? Madge was afraid of it.

The day wore on, and she continued to inhabit the cage to which she had been caught by Captain Mingo's spies.

At noon her dinner came as her breakfast had come in the morning, but when the nearest clocks struck six at night Madge was ready for a bold movement.

The approach of night threw her room in shadow, and she stationed herself near the door and waited for Una with the supper tray.

Minute and minute slipped away.

Madge almost lost her patience, and began to think that she was to be allowed no supper; but such was not the case.

At last footsteps approached the door.

Madge Mystery's eyes got an eager gleam, and her expectations were on tiptoe as the steps approached.

At length a key clicked in the lock, and the door opened easily as it had done twice since sunrise.

The girl sleuth caught the outlines of a wo-

man beyond the partly open door, and she saw also a tray containing some eatables.

The following moment Madge caught the door with both hands and exerted all her strength to force it further open.

There was a cry of resistance, accompanied by a show of opposing strength, and as the imprisoned girl bounded into the hall, she ran against a woman and upset a tray and its contents!

Una was thrown almost against the opposite wall by the force of Madge's dash for liberty, and before she could recover the girl shadow was flying down the hall.

The jaileress sprung after her with a sharp cry of rage, but Madge was at the door and the knob was in her hands.

In a twinkling she had jerked the portal open, and in another second was out in the open air.

Madge was now in a cramped back yard surrounded by a high fence of upright boards, but this did not deter her.

She felt that Una was at her heels—she did not look back to see—and so she made a beeline for the nearest portion of the fence. The next instant she clutched the top eagerly with her hands and drew herself up with the agility of a sailor.

True to her master, Una was doing her best, but Madge Mystery was too much for her, for when she reached the fence the girl was gone!

Una knew that further pursuit of her captive would be useless, and smothering her anger as best she could, she went back into the house to gather up the remains of the discarded supper.

As to Madge, she was laughingly congratulating herself on the success of her ruse, and in a little while was on her way back to her old quarters.

"You must hold a prisoner better than that, Captain Mingo," she said to herself. "The next time you get me in your power you won't trust me to Una's care, but you will secure a more careful guardian. When do the ten hours of the message terminate? I must find out if I can."

When Madge reached her room she placed the paper with the daguerreotype and locked both up in the bureau, then she made a change of clothing and went out again.

She now looked quite unlike the real Madge Mystery, thanks to the secrets of her toilet, and it would have taken the keenest eyes in New York's Malaysia or elsewhere to have penetrated her disguise.

Madge hurried up-town as if the upper part of the city had an attraction for her.

The cars that carried her ran terrible slow to her notion, and when she reached the station nearest Massena Branson's house she was beginning to think she would never get there.

There was about the house an air of quiet that struck the girl shadow peculiarly.

It was now past seven o'clock, and a light was to be seen beyond the closed blinds of one of the windows.

Madge resolved to watch the house awhile.

Perhaps the ten hours had not expired, but they might at any time, and the broker's foe put in an appearance.

She did not know what had taken place beyond the threshold, nor what was taking place there then, as she could not see beyond the closed doors of the mansion.

Madge's figure was scarcely seen in the shadow of the shade-tree a few feet from the steps.

She waited with much patience where she stood, seeing everybody that passed the house.

At last the front door opened, and a well-dressed man came down the steps.

Madge saw him from the first, and when he struck the sidewalk she almost let slip a cry.

That sleek fellow was a veritable tiger in kids—a cool, calculating demon of intrigue, for she had now recognized him as Captain Asgeelo, the Malay foe.

For one brief moment the rascal surveyed the house from over his shoulder. Madge saw the satanic smile of triumph which spread over his face while he looked; she caught, too, the devilish glitter of his eyes, and heard the rippling laugh of a scoundrel as he walked away!

"He dealt the blow, the villain did!" exclaimed the girl. "I am too late! Why did I fall into the hands of his spy? Why didn't I get out of durance an hour sooner? What has Dodger Dick been doing all day?"

She did not follow the Malay, who moved on with a light step which confirmed his victory.

She turned her attention to the house.

Beyond the shutter the light burned on as before. Madge thought it was a little softer, but she did not know.

"I am going to see something about this!" thought she. "I must know how the blow was received, and what it accomplished."

It took her but a moment to cross the sidewalk and in a trice she was jerking the bell.

Madge waited impatiently for a response to her ring.

"They certainly heard me," she exclaimed. "Can it be that they think that Captain Mingo has come back?"

At that moment the door opened.

"What is it?" inquired the butler, gruffly.

"I would like to see Miss Bertha."

"You can't; nobody can!" was the reply, in the same tones.

"But I am her friend. She may be looking for me—"

"She can't be looking for anybody now. If I were to deliver an opinion, I should say that she has seen enough for to-night."

"In Heaven's name, what did the man do?" cried Madge.

"What man?"

"The one who just went away from here."

"Who are you?"

The butler leaned forward to get a nearer view of the girl's face.

"I am called Madge Mystery," answered Madge.

"That settles it. Heaven knows there's too much mystery in this house now. I can't let you in. Good-night!" And the door was shut and locked, with the girl shadow of Gotham standing bewildered on the steps.

She followed her first impulse and grasped the knocker again, but on second thought let it drop.

"I won't intrude. If Captain Asgeelo dealt his blow, those who suffered are too much crushed to see me. I will come again, but meanwhile I will make it hot for the sleek tiger from the tropics. I may have lost him for a time, but I will pick him up as surely as he bears two names. If Bertha could have heard my voice, I would have been admitted, but after all I don't want to see her under the cloud of the Malay's cunning."

Madge looked up at the house once more and walked away.

In the mean time the butler who had refused her admittance went slowly up a richly-carpeted stair, and met a young girl in the darkened hallway on the next floor.

"Who was at the door, David?" asked a voice.

"A girl, Miss Bertha."

"A strange girl?"

"Yes. She called herself Madge Mystery, and said—"

The young lady interrupted the butler with a singular exclamation.

"That girl?" she cried. "I wish you had let her in, David. But, remember, that I don't censure you. No! My life has gone out like the flame of a candle. I wonder why some men are permitted to come into the world?" and Bertha Branson dropped her head and walked slowly down through the shadows of the hall and vanished.

"The heartless villain who was just here did it all. I wish I had him by the throat!" hissed the butler.

CHAPTER X.

DICK AND THE BROKER.

HALF an hour after her call at the Branson residence Madge was touched by a finger, and at the same time she heard a voice say:

"Go to your lodgings by a roundabout way. Go at once!"

That was all, but it was enough.

Madge did not look around to see who had spoken, and if she had she probably would not have got a glimpse of the speaker.

But she knew the voice, and almost before it had ceased to sound, she had increased her gait, and was some distance from the spot.

"The girl knows something. I can see that she has made a discovery of some kind. Well, so have I."

These words from the tongue of the person who had touched Madge, though spoken aloud, did not fall on the ears of any one for whom they were not intended.

"That is the fox! Keep him in sight, Mylo. Don't let him get away this time. The captain's orders must be obeyed to the letter. The success of his game may depend on our work. If we lose the fox, the captain may lose the big stakes."

Did Dodger Dick see the two nimble-footed and keen-eyed men who kept him in sight despite his windings among the people on the

street? Did he have a shadow of suspicion of what was hovering over him?

The two spies, Mylo and Muffet, the willing dogs of Captain Asgeelo, continued to keep Dodger Dick in sight.

As he turned into another street, a number of startling cries of fright rung out on the air, and people fell back in every direction.

Dick was caught in one of these receding waves and borne backward almost into the arms of the very men who were, thug-like, at his heels.

The following moment the cause of uproar was apparent.

Two large horses were coming down the street dragging after them a reeling express wagon. It was a scene terrible enough to frighten the stoutest men, and as the animals were liable to dash upon the sidewalks at any moment, the terror of the hour was increased ten fold.

The air was filled with cries. Men in the panic overthrew women and children, and the efforts of the few cool heads had no effect on the excited mass.

Suddenly the team veered to the right-hand side of the street, and then crashed into a lot of barrels and boxes. Nothing could have been more fortunate than this, for before the horses could recover, they were in the hands of several stalwart police.

As usual in such cases, the crowd rushed forward to see what damage had been done, and Dodger Dick was carried forward in the tide.

Hemmed in on every side, he could not have escaped if he had tried. He was carried on in the rush, barely touching the ground at all, but at the first opportunity, he disengaged himself and started off again.

"Where's the chap?" asked Muffet, catching Mylo's arm. "I must confess that I have lost him."

"So have I," was the confession.

"I thought we could keep him in view."

"In that jam? *Cristo!* I feel as though my ribs have been driven in. He can't be far away, though."

The two spies began to look for the Dodger, but it was a fruitless task; he had disappeared as effectively as if he had dropped into a secret scuttle-hole.

As their chagrin increased they ran hither and thither, hunting high and low for the boy sleuth of Gotham, but the longer they looked the deeper seemed to grow the mystery of the disappearance.

The reader, who has listened to Captain Asgeelo's injunctions to his four spies, can imagine the frenzy that seized on Mylo and Muffet after their defeat.

They were to entrap the Dodger that night; they knew how a failure to do so would be received; but what could they do more than to report that fate had baffled them—fate, assisted by a street accident?

Freed from the espionage which might have proved disastrous to him, Dodger Dick pushed on.

He wanted to see Madge Mystery as soon as possible, and soon after the accident he entered the girl detective's house.

He found her waiting for him in the little room.

"You were right, Madge," was Dick's first exclamation. "The captain of the Palm-Leaf is in New York."

"I knew that. I have just had proof of that."

"In what way?"

"I have seen him, dressed in cloth and kids, come down the steps of the broker's house."

Dodger Dick uttered a strange cry, and fell back a step.

"What was he doing there, Madge?"

"They would not let me in to see," was the reply. "At any rate, Dick, a blow of some kind fell to-night. I fear our work will avail nothing."

"What! You don't want to give up the fight, Madge?" cried the boy Vidocq. "I've enlisted for the war, and I don't intend to ask for my discharge till I've seen the enemy completely routed. If Captain Asgeelo has dealt his blow, now is the time to match him."

"But how?" asked the girl.

"By putting our heads together, and devising a plan that will succeed. What did he look like when he came out of the house?"

"Like a man who had won a great victory. From what the butler told me, I know that the Malay played a cool hand to-night, and played it well, too. If he has any secrets connected with his life—if we could only learn for certain that we could hold a sword over his head—"

"The sword is there already," interrupted

Dick. "I have just heard the history of that villain's career. I know that three nations want his head, and I believe that this Government would surrender him to the first of the three to ask for him."

Dick then proceeded and gave Madge the information he had obtained from Moszeelo, the Malay shoemaker.

The girl listened intently to the close of the narrative, when she said:

"You have obtained a footing against this cunning scamp, but that is all. His four confederates are still on the alert; he has crossed the threshold of Massena Branson's house; he has stood face to face with the family he intends to ruin. Maybe the broker has acceded to some infamous demands of his."

"I will know!" exclaimed the Dodger. "You could not get in. I will see what I can do."

"The same butler will answer your ring," smiled Madge. "He is a good man to obey orders. You will find him so."

"Nevertheless, I am going to try to get to Massena Branson this night."

"I trust you will succeed, Dick, but I fear you will not," answered Madge, shaking her head.

"I am off to try."

Left alone, the girl ferret of New York began to wait for Dick's return from his mission.

She had no hopes that he would succeed where she had failed, and she could imagine him coming back deeply disappointed.

Dodger Dick's escape from the Malay spies had prevented them from finding him again, and when he set off up-town he was not watched.

With a heart undaunted by nothing, he walked up the wide steps of the broker's mansion and rung a summons.

The shutters were closely drawn, and there were few signs of life about the house, but this did not discourage Dick.

Suddenly he heard a footstep beyond the door.

It was not the tread of a man.

A moment more a bolt shot back, and Dodger Dick was looking into the almost expressionless face of Bertha.

The young girl did not seem to recognize the boy caller till she had looked the second time.

Then a new light appeared to shine forth from her eyes, and she held the door open without a word.

Dick the Dodger glided into the hall.

"He has come and gone," fell from Bertha's lips, and her voice was so unnatural that Dick looked at her to make sure that she was really the broker's child.

"I'm sorry," ventured the young detective. "If I had known of it I should have been ahead of him."

"Never mind that. We don't blame you. Do you want to see father?"

"Yes, if he—"

"He will see you if only to pay you off," was the girl's interruption, and Dick, without another word, followed her up-stairs.

In a little while he was ushered into a room and left to himself as he at first thought, but in a moment he caught sight of a figure in an arm-chair, and then he started forward.

All at once the head before him moved, and Dick saw the changed face of Massena Branson.

In a night, as it seemed, the broker of Broad street had had twenty years added to his life.

He looked at the young ferret a few moments and then spoke:

"What do I owe you, sir?" said he.

Dodger Dick was at the chair in a twinkling.

"I haven't fulfilled my part of the agreement," exclaimed he. "I have found Captain Asgeelo—"

"And he has found me!" broke in the broker.

Dick looked thunderstruck.

"I don't blame you, boy," continued Mr. Branson. "You may have done your best. But it is now too late. The blow has fallen. I am in the clutches of that villain of villains. I have acceded to his demands. He made them boldly. Bertha heard them all and submits—she says to save my life. It blights her own, of course, for she is to become Captain Asgeelo's wife!"

CHAPTER XI.

TAKEN UNAWARES.

"In heaven's name, not that!" exclaimed Dick, staggered by the startling revelation, and then he looked at Massena Branson in doubt whether he had heard him aright.

The pale features before him and the lips still quivering with the fateful words, told the boy

ferret that the broker had really spoken as he had been heard.

"Yes," continued he, touching the Dodger's sleeve as he leaned forward, "Bertha is to become the scoundrel's bride. You wonder, I see you do, that I yielded. Boy, you don't know the power held by Captain Asgeelo. You can't look back and see what happened years and years ago. I did not expect my enemy to-night, but he came like an evil spirit from the abode of such things."

"When is the marriage to take place?" asked the young detective, catching his breath anew.

"I won't keep it from you for it will do no harm for you to know, as the consummation cannot be averted," continued the broker. "At the end of forty-eight hours from this time," glancing at the clock, "Bertha will, in a certain sense, be my child no longer."

"So soon as that?" cried the Dodger.

Branson bowed his head.

"It is not too late yet!"

"For what?"

"To block this game—to save both you and your daughter from this shame."

"You can't do it; no man can," was the reply. "I tell you we have submitted to the inevitable. There was a time when I might have escaped this day; but why talk of that period now? I thank heaven that Bertha's mother died before this hour. No, boy, you can't prevent the catastrophe. My word—my oath—is out, and I have nothing to do but to await the last act in the foul game."

Dick flushed with indignation, and his blood seemed to leap through his veins at these words.

"You will pardon me, Mr. Branson," he responded firmly, "but I don't intend to give it up. As I was going to tell you a while ago, I have found this Captain Asgeelo—I know who his associates are. I know more about the man than you think. You were his prisoner once."

The Broad street broker gave a guilty start.

"Do you know that? Yes, I fell into his hands."

"Taken on the high seas as a pirate takes his prey."

"Taken where you say," assented Branson.

"You were made to take an oath to secure the release of yourself and family."

"Who told you that, boy?"

Dick smiled.

"You forget that you are the person who set me on the track of this Malay tiger," observed he, as the smile vanished. "You must not think that I would not want to find out something about his past while I was at it. I have discovered something that approaches a secret, as you see. You need not tell me what that oath on shipboard amounted to. I can see for myself that it has just finished its work."

Before the broker could reply the door opened, and the figure of Bertha came into the room.

The father looked up at his child with a frown, but almost immediately it was chased away by a look of pity.

"I caught your last words," she said touching Dick's shoulder gently as she spoke. "You say you have learned something about my future husband?"

She did not appear in the least excited, but while he looked at her, the boy shadow of New York resolved again that the final trumps should never be held by the man called Captain Asgeelo.

"Yes, I've made several discoveries," he replied.

"They can do no good," continued Bertha. "The die is cast; the blow has fallen. I don't censure father. Remember, Dodger Dick, as they call you, that I stepped in when he was about to dare Captain Asgeelo to do his worst, and said that I would save the credit of this house by the sacrifice of myself. I wish I could think that some efforts of yours could break the spell, but the final catastrophe must come. Good-night!"

Bertha's hand fell from the boy's shoulder, and imprinting a kiss on her parent's brow she left the room and vanished.

"The truest girl in the world!" ejaculated Massena Branson. "And I curse myself when I think that an act of mine made her ruin possible."

He toppled toward the desk in front of him, and buried his face in the circle of his arms.

Dodger Dick watched him in silence. He heard the ticks of the clock as they mingled themselves with the broker's sobs, and, after waiting awhile, he stole away.

Massena Branson did not move.

The boy ferret gave him a last look from the

door, and then glided from the house, scarcely breathing till he found himself on the sidewalk once more.

"I'd be untrue to myself and justice and vengeance if I left the game now!" was his first ejaculation. "No grass grows under my feet from this moment. Forty-eight hours! Bertha Branson's happiness is forever destroyed if I fail, and Captain Asgeelo, the pirate of the tropic, scores his greatest triumph."

Dodger Dick might have been seen bending over a city Directory a few minutes later.

He ran his finger down a certain page till it stopped at a certain name:

"DALLAS, DAVID,

"666 S— street."

"That is it, if I'm not mistaken," murmured the boy, closing the book and quitting the hotel at once. "That is the name of the young man who was to have made Bertha Branson happy till this Malay shadow came between. I will not see him to-night any more, as it is late, but to-morrow I may hunt him up."

He did not halt again till he entered a little office-like room on the third floor of a building on middle Broadway, and then he was looking at a plain-faced, middle-aged man, who seemed to be wondering why Dick had made the late call.

"I want to know how I go about reporting to the English or French authorities the presence in New York of a person for whom the two Governments have offered a reward," began the Dodger.

"Who have you unearthed now?" asked the plain-looking man, who was one of the best private detectives of Gotham—Captain Claude Coldrip, by name.

"Never mind, captain" returned the boy. "I want a bit of information, as you see by my question. Can I have it?"

"Certainly, Dick. You can inform either of the resident consuls. But," with a smile, "I would advise you to inform the one whose Government offers the larger reward."

"I don't care for that. I want to block one of the most infamous schemes ever played here or elsewhere. What will the consul do?"

"If he is satisfied that you have found the right man, he will have him arrested."

"Can they extradite him?"

"What is the crime?"

"Murder."

"England can take him."

"Or France, too?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll show my hand!" exclaimed Dick.

"Many thanks, Captain Claude. You'll hear from me later on."

And without giving the gentleman detective time to interpose a question, he left the office.

"France or England—which shall it be?" mused Dick, once on the sidewalk. "But I'll look after Madge first. She's probably waiting for me to report from my journey up-town. I'm not far from her lodgings, so I'll run over a bit."

Ten minutes later, Dodger Dick went up the steps leading to the girl detective's room.

As he opened the door, which was standing slightly ajar, he gave a glance around and then gave utterance to a singular cry.

His gaze was riveted on the bureau, the top drawer of which stood open.

"Madge has been robbed!" exclaimed Dick, springing forward. "Ten chances to one the daguerreotype and the note are gone."

He could see at a look that somebody had plundered the drawer, and his hands failed to find either of the objects he had mentioned.

"This is the work of the Malay's spies!" cried Dick. "They have taken advantage of Madge's absence to search her room. They have evidently found that which their chief has lost."

"Yes, Senor American, and we have you, too!"

At that moment a wiry figure leaped across the room from behind the flowing curtain of Madge Mystery's wardrobe, and before the boy detective could lift a hand he felt himself in the clutch of dark-skinned hands.

At almost the same moment another figure sprang into the room from the hall, and when Dick looked into the shining eyes that confronted him, he knew he was the prisoner of Captain Asgeelo's spies!

CHAPTER XII.

DARK DURANCE.

MYLO and Muffet!

These were the fellows who had captured the boy ferret of New York.

They had lost him once, in the episode of the runaway team as the reader will recollect, but fortune, and unexpected fortune at that, had thrown him into their clutches.

The truth is that if Dodger Dick had kept aloof from the house a few minutes longer he would not have found himself a prisoner, for, having come there to search the premises the two scamps were about to leave when they heard him coming up the stairs.

They supposed it was Madge coming home, but when they looked from their concealment and saw the boy shadow, their exultation knew no bounds.

It was vain for Dick to struggle in the grip of the spies of the Malay, and knowing this he did not go further than a quick jerk back.

"Boy no noise make," said Mylo, giving Dick the full benefit of his tiger eyes. "Him get long pretty well if him no talk."

Muffet's look confirmed Mylo's words.

"Well, you've caught me, but you must watch me well. I get out of strong cages," exclaimed Dick boldly disobeying the injunction. "I know who your master is and why I've been trapped. It's a beautiful game you five fellows are playing, isn't it?"

"Big game, big money!" laughed Mylo, showing his teeth.

"What do you get for your share?"

The two men glanced at one another, but neither made reply.

"Do you find this more profitable than serving on the Palm-Leaf?"

"Boy no talk!" flashed both men at once, and Dick could see by their look that his last sally had told.

"I thought you'd have kept to the sea. But perhaps the powers that want your old captain wanted you also."

The fierce looks in the eyes before him grew fiercer still, and all at once one of the hands that held his arms was transferred to his throat.

"Silence! *Cristo!* does the American want to die where he is?" hissed the owner of the yellowish hand.

Dick could not have answered even if he had desired to, but then he had gone far enough anyway, and had scored the point he wanted to make.

Five minutes afterward he was down on the street with a Malay on each side.

Suddenly something fell over his face and pressed against his eyes, then the lights of New York seemed swallowed up in darkness, and Dick knew that he had been blindfolded.

"Now for prison!" passed through his mind. "Maybe I won't get to report to either of the foreign consuls for some time to come, but I must do something before the forty-eight hours expire."

After being walked some distance through total darkness as it seemed, Dick was put into a vehicle of some kind and the journey was continued on wheels.

He had no idea through what part of the city he was being taken, and the rattle of the cab over the stones threatened to go on forever.

As all journeys end some time Dick's came to a full stop—he did not know where.

He was assisted out of the vehicle, a hand on each arm and was conducted across a narrow sidewalk, and down a short flight of basement steps.

At the bottom one of his conductors unlocked a door and all three entered a place which was as dark as rayless night.

After this Dick was taken up-stairs into a room which had a carpet and then the bandage was jerked from his eyes.

He found himself blinded by a flame but only for a short time, then he made out the dimensions of his prison and saw the figures of his captors.

"Boy kin talk now," laughed Muffet. "Him been good all along. Good-by."

The two men vanished before the Dodger could frame a sentence and he was alone in the almost bare room which had been selected for his prison.

Dick's first move was to the one window that the place contained.

It seemed to be protected on the outside by heavy shutters, but by climbing to the sill he was enabled to find a crack beyond which he saw the street lamps twinkling in the darkness.

For some time Dodger Dick kept his position reflecting on the startling events which had taken place within the last three hours.

He had been in traps before, but never in one from which he was so eager to escape as the present.

He recalled the terrible revelation he had heard from Massena Branson's lips.

At the end of forty-eight hours, and the clocks of Gotham were already knocking them off, Bertha would become the wife of the crafty and merciless Malay who was playing a deep game for more than her.

There would be no let up on Captain Asgeelo's part.

He had come to New York to play the very game he was playing; he had brought with him four men whose value he knew, and who would profit along with their master by the success of the scheme.

Broker Branson was one of the wealthiest of the Broad street money dealers. He had a fortune that ran away up into the thousands, and in the end it would fall into the lap of the expirate of the tropic seas.

Dick did not know that during his interview with his Malay foe, Branson had offered him one-half of his enormous wealth to go away and let him be. This was one of the secrets the broker had not imparted to the boy.

Captain Asgeelo had scornfully refused this offer; he had come to the house for all or nothing, and the result was that he carried his cruel point.

Dick could not tell how long he stood on the ample sill and looked out where the lamps were.

Just beyond the iron shutters of the window was liberty, but the question was: How am I to get there?

The young Vidocq wondered what had become of Madge Mystery, and whether the Malays had not captured her before obtaining their victory over him.

Dick did not know the truth.

It was impossible for him to be aware of the fact that when he came out of Madge's house between Mylo and Muffet he was seen by a pair of pretty but observing eyes.

He was followed by those same eyes the whole distance of his journey on foot, and when the carriage started off with him it carried an additional passenger between the hind-wheels.

This passenger was no one less than Madge, the girl shadow.

Fortune had brought her home in time to witness the sight just mentioned, and in an instant her eyes were opened to the full extent of the scheme.

Agile, for one of her sex, Madge found no difficulty in maintaining her position on the vehicle during the jolting journey over the stones. Probably she had taken such rides before.

When the cab stopped and Dick was taken out, Madge allowed it to carry her half a block away, when she dropped lightly to the ground, and let the driver proceed without any passenger.

She went back and found the house which had received Dodger Dick as silent and as dark as one entirely uninhabited; but she knew that it held the young street fox of New York.

Madge hovered about the place, devising one scheme only to drop it for another.

She was fertile enough in plans for reaching Dick, but none of them suited her exactly.

"He must get out somehow!" ejaculated the girl. "We were to fight Captain Asgeelo together, and I don't want to go to the next move without Dodger Dick. He must come out, I say. That old house shall not hold him."

Madge saw the iron shutters of the place. They were deceptive, for they resembled shutters of wood. It was enough for the girl to touch them.

At last she disappeared down an alley which stretched away some distance from the house, then she scaled a fence and went from lot to lot till she believed she had reached the one which contained the Dodger's place of confinement.

This was a piece of risky business for the girl ferret.

If the enemy was on guard she was in danger of being picked up, and she had no desire to fall again into the fierce clutches of the four.

The next time, perhaps, Una would not be her attendant.

Madge Mystery crept up to the house, and listened at the back door.

Not a sound rewarded her.

Had she missed the place?

It could not be. She had counted lots and could not be mistaken.

Suddenly the door at which she had listened opened.

The person who came out brushed the girl detective as she drew breathless back. She caught a glimpse of a man's figure ere it vanished toward the end of the lot.

The door had not been locked, and Madge raised the latch softly and crept in.

She was now in a strange house and amid darkness of the densest sort.

Her peril had increased twenty fold.

She collected her thoughts for the next move, and just as she was about to make it, the outside door opened and shut, and a man crossed the room in the gloom.

"I'm in for it now!" thought the girl shadow.

Indeed she was.

CHAPTER XIII.

JUSTICE LOSES A LINK.

MORE resolute people than the girl detective of Gotham would have recoiled from taking another step in the drama she was enacting, but Madge did not flinch.

She believed she had entered the house to which her friend the Dodger had been brought by the men into whose hands he had fallen at her lodgings, and it was her duty to liberate him if possible.

She had no idea of backing out now.

When the door closed leaving her in darkness, Madge Mystery collected her thoughts and began to devise a plan of campaign.

The man who had crossed the floor had opened and closed another door somewhere—the girl could not exactly locate it—and Madge heard his footsteps no longer.

By stealing round the room on tip-toe, she found the second door, and immediately placed her ears at the latch.

After a few seconds of silence she heard the hum of voices, and then she began to distinguish the words.

"The captain won't curse our work to-night," said one, and the words were followed by a light laugh of satisfaction.

"*Cristo!* I should say not; but it was by accident we found the boy fox. He walked in to what turned out to be a trap. It was a lucky catch, and what we lost on one street we caught on another. Now if we had the bird that gave Una the slip!"

"We'll get her soon. Her liberty can't last long with four of us on the lookout for her. By this time the captain holds the prize in his hands."

"If the American did not resist."

"What if he did, Comrade Muffet?" was the quick retort.

"Resistance would do him no good, and he knows it. Captain Asgeelo knows too much, and I guess we know something ourselves. Ha! ha! Now for a bottle of somebody's best, and then for the girl shadow—the only person now in our path."

Madge drew back from the door, for footsteps were approaching, and while she hugged the darkest corner of the very dark room, she heard the latch click and feet cross the floor.

She knew that a match would discover her, or that the slightest noise on her part would throw her into the clutches of as heartless a pair of ruffians as ever lived, and it behooved her to maintain a breathless silence, which she did.

No search was made of the room, for the two Malays had no suspicion that their girl foe was so near, and they tramped away, locking the door behind them.

For some time Madge did not stir.

She was locked up in a strange house, and the men, who wanted to find her for a purpose that made her flesh creep when she thought of it, were off on the wrong scent.

She knew that the door opening into the room beyond the one she occupied had but a common latch lock, and when she tried it, it yielded readily, and she went forward.

The room beyond was as dark as Erebus, but Madge's fingers found a door as they had done many times before.

"Who's that?" exclaimed Dodger Dick, getting down from his window-sill and going to the door. "Am I to have a visit from the rascals who caged me here?"

He soon discovered, or thought he did, that the person beyond the portal was not one of the Malay spies, and then he placed his lips near the jamb.

"Who's there?" he asked.

Madge started, but her answer was not held back.

"It is I, Dick."

"Madge?"

"Madge."

"Thank fortune! I'm in a trap. I was cleverly caught in your room by the two rogues who serve Captain Asgeelo so well. They had just plundered your lodgings—"

"Did, eh?" broke in the girl, with a laugh. "That which they got, Dick, won't enrich them nor make their captain smile."

"What! didn't they find the picture?"

"No, nor the message, either."

"Good!"

"I thought my place might be visited by the spies, so I took the two articles away. They found nothing of any importance in my room."

"Nothing? You forget, Madge, that they found me there," replied the boy ferret.

In a little while Madge Mystery was at work on the door which stood between Dodger Dick and liberty.

"We have forty-eight hours for work," he said to her while she labored.

"Why that length of time?"

"Captain Asgeelo dealt his blow sure enough."

Madge stopped work at once.

"The rascal! when I saw him emerge from the house I thought he had played his hand. What will happen at the end of forty-eight hours if he is not thwarted?"

"Bertha becomes his wife!"

A sharp cry broke over the girl's lips.

"That good creature his bride? It shall never be while my name is Madge Mystery! So he demands her for the keeping of his secret, does he?"

"He does."

"Then we must to work!" cried Madge, attacking the door again. "The villainies of this pirate and his spies shall not be consummated. If I can catch the lock as I had it awhile ago when you startled me with your announcement, I am sure I will succeed. There! I have it again. Now, hold your breath a minute, Dodger Dick."

The boy detective did not have to be told to do this.

He knew that all depended on the girl's nerve and skill, which were almost marvelous when she had anything of the kind on hand, and for a second he waited at the door in breathless silence.

Suddenly there sounded on his ears the noise of the slipping of a bolt, and the next moment he seized the knob and gave it a twist.

A cry of victory broke from his throat.

He could not keep it back, for the door was open and he was holding Madge's hands in the gloom of the two apartments.

Free!

There was something in the thought that sent a thrill through every fiber of the boy spy's nature.

"Now let the Malay look out!" cried he.

"No false step now!" whispered cautious Madge. "We have reached the heat of the fight. We must make no mistake, for the foe will be on his guard. If Bertha becomes his wife we must drop the game."

"But she shall be saved! I don't care so much about the broker, for he had no business to put himself into Captain Asgeelo's hands; but the innocent shall not suffer for the guilty."

"That is what I say."

"Then we work together as before. Come! I want to get out of this place. Thank fortune! the prison did not get to keep me very long. I was afraid it would baffle me, for the shutters seem to be iron ones, and every article I possessed when taken, was taken from me by the two tropic cats."

Madge and Dick did not experience any trouble in getting from the house, and when they came out on the street some distance below it, they glided off like a pair of ghosts.

"I will now go to the consul's residence," remarked the boy spotter.

"The girl gave him a singular look."

"For what?" she asked.

"To close in with Captain Asgeelo. You forget what Moszeelo, the old shoemaker, told me."

"I forget nothing, Dick," answered Madge, touching the boy's arm. "Were you going to lodge information against the Malay, at one of the consulates?"

"Yes."

"At which one?"

"I had decided on turning him over to England."

"Let us see something first. Maybe Captain Asgeelo would be hard to identify. His spies would not give him away, and you don't want to drag Massena Branson and Bertha into the case?"

"Not if I can help it."

"I thought so. Are you sure that Moszeelo would swear that the man we want to turn over to England is the pirate captain of the pirate Palm-Leaf?"

"I would think he would, for the scar he carries on his arm."

"Let us find out. It is not too late to visit Moszeelo?"

"No; the old fellow is up all night."

A moment later the young ferrets of the metropolis were hastening toward that part of

the city inhabited by the maker of nobby shoes—Moszeelo, the Malay, who hated Captain Asgeelo.

This testimony would be highly important, as Dick could see.

Indeed, without it he doubted whether the villain could be held an hour if caught, and he did not think for a second that the old shoemaker would hesitate to testify against the man whose saber had marked him for life.

They reached Moszeelo's house, and went in at the door which was never locked. Dick knew where the shop was.

He guided Madge, who had never been there before, through the hall, and found the door with which he was familiar.

In they both went.

"Great heavens!" cried the boy Vidocq, falling back against Madge as he crossed the threshold, and then he caught the girl's arm.

"Look yonder! As I live, Madge, we have come too late!"

The girl looked, and her gaze at once became riveted on the sight she saw.

On the floor before them, among his lasts and shoes, lay the figure of Moszeelo, as if he had fallen forward from his bench.

Dodger Dick sprang toward him with a cry.

The next instant he had raised the old man's head, and Madge had uttered three words which told the story:

"He is dead!"

CHAPTER XIV.

STEPS ON THE STAIR.

OVER this scene fell the somewhat sorry stock of light that emanated from the gas-burner in the wall several feet above the shoemaker's bench.

"Is it crime, Dick?" asked the girl shadow, looking at her young companion, who had stooped over old Moszeelo, in one of whose hands was tightly clutched his last work, a lady's shoe.

"I can't say, Madge," was the answer. "I see no marks of violence. It may be a case of sudden death—nothing more. Of one thing I am sure. Moszeelo will never identify Captain Asgeelo for us, nor for any one else. The Malay is safe on that score. I think we had better get away from here. We don't want to be dragged before the coroner. The forty-eight hours are passing, you know."

"And we have much to do," answered Madge.

As Dodger Dick got up after his last word, he happened to look toward the wall where the jet burned.

The following moment Madge Mystery saw him leaning forward over the shoemaker's bench.

"What is it, Dick?"

"There are a few words of writing here," and the boy detective showed Madge a number of marks on the wall. "Here's a word, and there's another. They look like they've been hurriedly scribbled. They are in some strange language."

"Malay?"

"No, I think not."

"Maybe they've been there a long time."

The street ferret fell back.

"I can't say, I'm sure, Madge. Moszeelo knew a dozen languages besides his own," he went on. "He used to write some words in all, just to show me how smart he was; but I think he could write Spanish best."

"Then, if that is Spanish on the wall, you are stuck."

"Not for long, Madge. I've got a friend who can make it out and I have a notion to go straight to him."

"Who is he?"

"My friend, Claude Coldgrip, the detective."

"Let it be," advised Madge. "We will get at the meaning of the words on the wall soon enough. Moszeelo will never identify Branson's foe in court. If you want him found by the authorities drop a hint at the right place. Now what about going to the consuls?"

Dodger Dick looked into the girl's face with a puzzled expression on his own.

"Leave that to me!" he suddenly exclaimed.

"I am going over into Malaysia. We are on the edge of it now."

"You'll find eyes on the watch there."

"Perhaps."

"You won't go in your present garb?"

"Not much, Madge."

"What do you want to discover in the Malay quarter?"

"Two things."

"Well?"

"In the first place, I want to know where I will find Captain Asgeelo when I want him, and, secondly, I want to see the man himself."

"Face to face?"

"Not particularly thus."

By this time the old shoemaker's house and its dead tenant had been left behind, and a square further on Madge and Dick separated, the latter keeping his intention by turning his face in the direction of Malaydom.

This time he did not cross the step of Nicholas De La Cruze's establishment, therefore he did not get the benefit of the vile tobacco smoke to be found there of all places.

He passed the house with a vivid recollection of the usual scenes within, and stopped in the deep shadow of a low-browed building a few rods away.

The sharpest eyes alert in that quarter of New York that night could not have made out the boy ferret even a few feet away. He was like the wall itself, a part of it as it were.

There he stood for some time moving not, but not with his eyes closed.

He saw every figure that passed; he noticed the gliding ones and the stumbling others. He distinguished the nearly full-blooded Malays from the mixed men whose only claim to Malay lineage is the creese they carry under their coats.

For whom was Dodger Dick on the watch?

He kept his place more than an hour with the patience of a Parisian detective.

At the end of that time he was passed by a man whom he noticed with more than passing look.

"At last!" muttered Dick. "I knew I had but to stand here long enough to see the head villain himself. All the Malay population of New York pass this point between two days or after ten at night, or at least such is the saying. There you go, Captain Asgeelo. You don't wear the kids you had on when you delivered the blow that made Bertha Branson wish she had never been born. You have put your fine duds away—for the wedding, perhaps. I want to see a little more of you before I dismiss you. Because Death has silenced my witness against you I don't intend to give up. You don't know Dodger Dick, Captain Asgeelo."

The young detective followed the man who led him some distance before he stopped.

He was then in front of a well-to-do house.

Dick had stopped a few feet away and was looking at him from behind a tree at the gutter.

Captain Asgeelo stood at the steps going up to the front door and looked up the street toward the corner where the figures of two men were observable under a lamp.

Dick saw the men by watching the man he had shadowed.

Suddenly the figures separated and one came pit-a-pat down the walk toward Captain Asgeelo.

"One of the four," thought Dick watching the figure with a great deal of curiosity. "The person who left him at the lamp was another."

By this time the footsteps on the pavement had ceased, and then he saw two men close together in front of the house.

"You have done well," reached the boy's ears in the well-known voice of the broker's enemy. "I expect you to find the she hawk when you will finish the play as you have been instructed. What have I done! By the stars! Mayo, I have pledged my trumps and won. The game is nearly out. A few hours settles it. Don't ask me what the winnings amount to, but they're more than enough for all. Day after to-morrow you will be ready to go back. The voyage will be made pleasant by what you will carry away with you. No more loafing around the smoke houses of New York. This isn't the old stamping ground, eh, Mylo. This isn't the sea by odds, my friend."

"Cristo! no!" Dick heard. "We'll hate to leave you, captain."

"It won't be for long. I'll join you sooner than you think, for I'm not at home in the city of the Americans. To-morrow night I make the two fortunes; after that I become the old commander again. Good-night."

There was an interchange of salutes, and the man who stepped back from Captain Asgeelo wheeled and passed the statue-like boy against the tree.

Dick knew that discovery would mean a tigerish spring, with its consequences, and not for the city that surrounded him would he have revealed his presence to the fiercest and most agile of the Malay captain's spies.

He saw Mylo vanish, watched by Captain Asgeelo till he did so, and then he looked at his quarry.

"They've stood royally by me," ejaculated the

man at the steps, as if forgetful of his situation. "With the boy fox trapped, and the young she night hawk hunted by fellows who never fail, I think I ought to be congratulated. By the cross of the sisters! I am in my element in the city of the Americans as well as I am on my favorite deck."

"Don't whistle till you're through the woods," laughed the Dodger. "I wish I had found Moszeelo in a condition to use his tongue; but, never mind, captain, the game doesn't end in this case till the last card has been played."

While the boy talked the Malay entered the house, and when the door had closed Dick went forward and noted the number above the door.

"I think I can safely say that I have located him to a certainty. So he is going to ship his four spies each after to-morrow, is he? He won't need them after that, he thinks. I think so, too."

Dodger Dick turned back from the house and walked toward De La Cruze's Malay hotel.

As he reached it the front door opened, and a man appeared in the light.

"My friend Mylo," exclaimed the boy. "I wonder what he would give to know that I am within a few feet of him. Ho, Mylo, your traps don't hold very well. The next time you want to make sure that Madge Mystery is not at your heels."

For several seconds Dick secretly watched the wiry figure that stood revealed, unconscious of the espionage, and when Mylo started off he followed at a respectful distance.

"To-morrow to the English consulate," he mused. "I think I will be justified in turning the man from the tropics over to the country that wants him. I won't have Moszeelo to back me, but I'll be breaking the spell that holds Bertha Branson and her father in his clutches."

It was with these words that the boy detective of New York turned his steps toward Mother Sturgeon's, and when he crept, silently he thought, into his little chamber to catch some sleep for the excitement of the coming day, he was met by a hand that touched him softly.

"Dick, my boy, I've been waiting," said a voice which he knew so well. "A cat-like step has come up the stair and gone back twice within the hour. But you are here safe—thank fortune for that."

Dodger Dick looked into Mother Sturgeon's face, but said nothing.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SILENT WITNESS.

THE next morning, bright and early, Dodger Dick rung the bell of No. 608 S—street.

It was his first visit to the house, but he knew who occupied a part of it as well as though he had called a hundred times.

He was admitted by a young girl, who in response to his inquiry as to whether one David Dallas was at home, informed him that he had not called in vain.

Dick was about to be shown into a side-parlor, there to wait for the person whom he wanted to see, when a man's voice came down from the second landing requesting the girl to send the visitor up.

In a minute the boy ferret of New York stood before a young man of twenty-three, with whose look was mingled wonder and inquiry.

"You asked for David Dallas; I am that person," said the gentleman.

Dick knew that he confronted Bertha Branson's now discarded lover—discarded because Captain Asgeelo the Malay enemy had played his merciless game.

He made himself known at once, for Dick the Dodger never stood on ceremony, and when he had spoken, David Dallas seemed to start.

"I presume you know what has happened," continued Dick.

The young man smiled.

"I know, for one thing, that affairs of a certain kind are not running smoothly as they did a short time ago. If that is what you mean, boy, I am aware that something has happened."

"At Massena Branson's house?"

Bertha's lover colored.

"Yes, even there if you insist," he replied. "Come, let us get fairly at the business. What do you know?"

That was just what the young shadow wanted.

"I know that something must be done quickly," answered he. "In a short time Bertha will be a bride—"

"Whose bride?" broke in David Dallas, and he started forward as if he intended to jerk Dick out of his chair.

"Don't you know anything about the scheme?" exclaimed the startled boy.

"She would not tell me. The poor girl thunderstruck me with the announcement that, in the interests of the family, our engagement must be broken, and when I called to know just why, I was confronted by a secret which I have not been able to penetrate."

"Have you tried to solve the puzzle?"

"I have. I have had the house watched by private detectives."

"With what result?"

"A man has been seen to go in—a well dressed man in evening costume. Is that the cause of all this change, boy?"

There was a smile on the Dodger's lips.

"I guess you may call him the serpent in the dove's nest," was the reply.

"Who is he?"

"Captain Asgeelo."

The name seemed to surprise the young man.

"It is not American," said he at length.

"No; it is Malay."

"Great Caesar! do you tell me that Bertha is to become the wife of that man?"

"It has been settled so I believe."

"Why, I never knew that she had met such a man."

"She has seen him but twice."

"I can't believe this!" cried Dallas. "I mean, perhaps, that I don't want to credit it. What is the grip which Captain Asgeelo has on Branson, the broker, for I will not believe that Bertha voluntarily released me for that yellow-skinned serpent from the South?"

Dodger Dick told David Dallas as much about the plot as he knew.

Through the narrative the listener sat spell-bound, but his color came and went, and his hands would close at times as if they felt the throat of the Malay captain.

"I am satisfied that the private detectives I have in my employ are no good," he said at last, when Dick had concluded. "They could have followed Captain Asgeelo to his haunts. Then I might have suspected something before this. You have done some good work, and now you have but to put forth your hand to block the yellow rascal's game."

"It is not so easy as that. By this time the five foes know that I am not in the old house, and every movement of mine will be closely watched. They caught me at night before, but from now on they will not hesitate to strike in broad daylight."

"I believe that," admitted David Dallas. "I am eager to help baffle this cool head. Why, I never heard of such an infamous game! Do you think that Branson did go back and serve on his pirate ship as Moszeelo intimidated?"

"I am afraid he did."

"Then, I can see why they have yielded to Captain Asgeelo. The man evidently did not ask for money, or Branson would have bought him off."

"I believe he would have given his last dollar," answered Dick. "The villain takes something more valuable than money. Bertha is not going to see her father exposed for the one error of his life. She steps in and offers to become the Malay's wife to keep him silent. It is a terrible sacrifice, and one which must not be made."

"Never!" cried the young man. "This villain of villains must be choked off. But how?"

"Are you engaged for to-day?"

"No."

"Then I want you. I learn by the Directory that you are employed by Costelar & Son, merchants."

"I am their private secretary."

"Then you understand Spanish?"

David Dallas smiled.

"Yes, Spanish and several other tongues," said he.

"I want you to look at some scribbling on a certain wall," continued Dick. "And if you have no objection we will go at once."

Bertha's lover was ready in a moment.

A singular eagerness had seized him, and he hurried along like a person goaded by some great impulse.

Dick guided him to the house where Moszeelo the old Malay had followed the, for him, strange occupation of making shoes.

They entered the house unquestioned, but a woman who met them in the hall said that the body had been found and that it had been decided that the shoemaker had died from heart disease.

"If that is true," thought Dick, "then the writing on the wall discovered by Madge and I, may mean nothing. If the old fellow was suddenly struck, he had no time to leave anything behind. But we will see."

The two companions obtained admission to Moszeelo's workshop on pretense of looking for

a shoe which they said had been brought thither some time before, and in a little while David Dallas was looking at some marks on the wall.

"This is Spanish sure enough," he observed looking over his shoulder at the boy detective who stood breathless by waiting for the verdict. "They are disconnected, jumbled together and that sort of thing. It looks like they were written by jerks. Ah! I have it now!"

Dodger Dick went forward with an exclamation of eagerness.

"What is it?" he he cried. "I hope you've found something that will help us."

"I have found this," was the response. "The words on the wall read: *Captain Asgeelo did it! I knew too much. It was the poison of the dyaks. It is—taking—me—now!*"

Dick could not keep back a shout.

"Is that there?" he exclaimed.

"As I live, it is!" responded Dallas. "Shall I translate it word for word for you?"

"That is not necessary. The old fellow knew too much, did he? He ought to know something since he carried Captain Asgeelo's mark on his arm. Perhaps the Malay tiger discovered that I came to see old Moszeelo sometimes, and so he silenced him. The poison of the dyaks! What is that?"

"Ask Captain Asgeelo," remarked David Dallas with a smile. "But from what I heard an old traveler say in our office one afternoon, it is a deadly poison that can be communicated to the victim on the point of a pin; but I never thought I would hear of its use in New York."

He then read the writing again and reported that his translation was correct.

"What next?" he asked turning suddenly upon Dick.

"The arrest of the man from the South Seas!" was the answer.

"At the request of the British Consul?"

"No! The hand of American justice is to close on the rascal now. That writing on the wall fixes upon him a crime for which he can be punished in this country where he played his big hand. It would be poor satisfaction to see him go to England for trial, and then to hear that the shrewd lawyers over there got him out of the snap. No! I want Uncle Sam to lay hands on Captain Asgeelo. I want to stand by and show him that Dodger Dick knows a thing or two when it comes to running a scoundrel down."

"You are right!" observed the young man.

"Once break the spell and the Malay's jig is up."

"It may not be so easily broken," replied Dick, in all seriousness. "You want to take down the writing on the wall. Take the words exactly as they are jumbled together; make a perfect copy if you can. I'm going to lengthen Captain Asgeelo's neck with them if possible."

David Dallas took out notebook and pencil and began his task.

While he worked, Dick strolled to the window and looked out upon the street.

It was not wide, and he could recognize people across it by his keen eyes.

All at once he gave a slight start, and leaned forward for better observation.

Then David Dallas heard a quick cry.

"What is it?" he asked, stopping in his work and looking up.

"Look at the man across the street yonder, against the house."

"I see him."

"Well, that is my old acquaintance, Mylo, on the watch."

CHAPTER XVI.

MADGE'S STORY.

THE actions of the spy across the street convinced the young shadow that he was doing his master, the Malay captain, a service.

"So, that is your captor?" ejaculated David Dallas when he had watched the man a few moments.

"That is Mylo."

"He doesn't look like a giant."

"He is not, in stature, but when it comes to strength and agility, look out."

"Mylo is agile, is he?"

"As a cat!"

The boy and his friend left the house by the back way when Dallas had finished taking down the writing on the wall. They did this in order to leave Mylo on guard, and not to cause him to suspect that he had been seen.

"I promised Madge that I would make no very important move without informing her," suddenly spoke the Dodger looking up at Dallas.

"This is one of that kind."

"Must you see the girl?" asked the young man impatiently.

"She may have made some discoveries since I saw her last. We want all such, you know."

"That is true."

"You can go where you will, but you want to keep the secret of the writing to yourself," continued Dick. "I will join you either at Castelar & Sons, or at your lodging at the end of two hours."

"At my lodging."

"Agreed," and Dodger Dick separated from Dallas and turned away to find Madge Mystery.

Ten minutes later he was suddenly touched on the sleeve in a crowd on the sidewalk, and a voice said:

"To my house at once. I want to see you."

It was Madge herself who spoke.

In a little while the boy Vidocq walked into the room where he had fallen into the power of Captain Asgeelo's spies, and bound, and found Madge waiting for him.

The girl's eyes were beaming with poorly suppressed excitement, and she came toward Dick with an exclamation as he crossed the threshold.

"I have a little news!" cried she.

"Well?"

"He knows that you are no longer in his power."

"I don't doubt it, Madge. I have just seen Mylo on the watch."

"And not long ago I had the pleasure of making a study of the other three."

"Where were they?"

"Exchanging plans over their glasses on the Bowery."

"They need to work fast now," continued Dick, laughing. "I am not the one to call a game out till it has been played out, for no one knows what slips may occur. But I am inclined to think that we have the chances in our favor."

Madge shook her head.

"I don't know," was the response. "I don't know what to make of Massena Branson. I have been up there."

"Since I came away?"

"Yes. I have just returned from the visit."

"Did you see the broker?"

"I did."

"And Bertha?"

"And Bertha, and the captain of the Palm-Leaf, too."

"What!" cried Dick falling back in his chair.

"Where was Captain Asgeelo?"

"He was on his way to the house when I left it."

"He takes a shadow with him wherever he goes?"

"Yes; and that shadow has fallen over Bertha's life, effectually blighting it. But I want to tell you about my interview with the broker."

"Go on."

"He admitted to me that once he fell into Captain Asgeelo's hands, and that he was persuaded to take a certain oath which he never expected to be asked to fulfill. It was not long before he discovered that he was at the mercy of one of the greatest rogues in the world. At last some years passed away before he heard of his persecutor again. He began to hope that Captain Asgeelo was dead, and during this period his wife died, and Bertha developed into a beautiful young woman. When he made the discovery that the Malay still lived he began to fear that he had not forgotten the strange and foolish oath, and when the letters began to come he knew what they meant."

"Massena Branson loves his child as a father can love his daughter, but he loves also his business and social reputation as it is known to the people of New York. He hoped to fight Captain Asgeelo with silence, but when he found that that weapon would prove of no avail, he tried to buy him off. Then he realized the deep iniquity of the Malay's game, but still he had resolved that Bertha should not be sacrificed. When the enemy came in his shiny kids to play his last hand, he found Branson ready to fight, but Bertha terminated the interview by offering to save the house by becoming Asgeelo's wife."

"Did the broker tell you this, Madge?"

"Yes. He told me the whole story. At the close of it he said that things would have to take their course." Madge Mystery went on: "Bertha sat at his side holding his hands in hers, and listening to every word. They want the hunt to stop. They believe that our work can only end in exposing Massena Branson's past and in breaking him down by the exposure of his shame. Bertha, with her face as white as her shroud will be some day, asked me to give up the chase—to let her become the wife of

their foe, and thus keep from the world the dreadful secret of their house. I wished I was a thousand miles away while she talked. Fortunately she did not ask me to pledge myself to inactivity, and I left as soon as I could."

"You heard and saw a good deal, Madge," observed Dick when the girl had finished her story. "But you got no clew to the secret which Captain Asgeelo has played so well?"

"Of course they kept that back."

"But did not their words throw some light upon it?"

"A little," answered Madge. "Massena Branson seemed to measure his words while he talked, and once or twice when he thought he approached forbidden ground he looked at Bertha and stopped. I believe that he is the man who, as Moszeelo told you, once fell into Captain Asgeelo's hands on the seas, and that the oath he took involved his daughter, then very young—a babe, in fact."

"That is it!" exclaimed Dick. "It can be nothing else. Branson thought that, as things usually go with Malay pirates, Captain Asgeelo would soon have his career cut short, and that then the oath would not have to be fulfilled, and the secret could be kept."

"You must be right, Dick."

"It isn't all guess-work, Madge," returned the boy ferret. "I have picked up one link here and another there till the chain is about complete. What is the use of dealing in kids with this case? I want to beat this Malay serpent who, with his four spies, would like to silence us forever; but at the same time I would get ahead of him without exposing the family up town."

Madge Mystery reflected for a moment.

"The five will keep a lookout for us," she said at length. "I overheard as much from the three I saw in the Bowery. They suspect that I helped you out of the old house, and therefore they would like to tickle me under the chin, ha, ha!"

"Which they will not get to do, Madge?"

"Not while I am Madge Mystery of New York!" was the laughing rejoinder.

Dick proceeded to tell of his visit to Moszeelo's room and to acquaint the girl with the finding of the writing on the wall, as they had seen it once before, and with the translation made by David Dallas.

"That helps to weave a web about Captain Asgeelo," remarked the girl. "It is circumstantial evidence, and pretty strong at that, I think. It is enough to begin on—quite enough to cause the arrest of Captain Asgeelo, the Malay."

"At once, Madge?"

"At once!" cried the girl, promptly.

Dick did not keep back his acquiescence.

"It shall be done! Now or never!" he exclaimed.

"We must not rest till we find Captain Asgeelo!" continued the girl, in the same strain. "The allotted time is wearing away and Bertha Branson is nearing the most miserable hour of her existence. To work at once!"

"Alone?"

"No. Choose several keen detectives to help us close in on the game."

"I am ready."

A few minutes later Dodger Dick was closeted with one of the highest police officials of New York who listened to his story of the find in Moszeelo's house.

"The Captain Mingo of the Malay quarters is the Captain Asgeelo I'm after," finished the Dodger who had not mentioned Massena Branson or Bertha even by imputation. "He is to taken for the murder of the old shoemaker. Is the writing on the wall enough to begin on?"

"It is quite enough, Dick," replied the inspector. "From what you say, I think we will be able to put the Malay in a tight place."

"I am sure of it. If I don't bring to naught one of the most dastardly games ever played in this city or elsewhere, I'll bid Mother Sturgeon good-by and emigrate!" And the boy shadow of Gotham walked out of the office, in his eye a gleam of triumph and his lips resolutely set.

The inspector had promised him that secret information would be sent at once to certain officers, and that in less than an hour Captain Asgeelo the Malay would be caught.

But the young Vidocq was yet to play another exciting act in the stormy drama.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE NICK OF TIME.

MADGE MYSTERY had been fortunate in picking up the three Malays in the Bowery.

If they had discovered the girl, it is highly probable that she would not have got to narrate

her adventures to the Dodger in her own little room, for the yellow trio were on the lookout for her.

She learned enough from the bits of conversation which she was able to pick up that the gang knew of Dick's escape from the old house, and that she was suspected of aiding the boy.

This was true.

The rage of Captain Asgeelo's spies knew no limits when they made this discovery, and in the consultation that followed, a dark oath was taken to the effect that Dick and Madge should be silenced at once.

It was about the time of Madge's narrative that Captain Asgeelo himself entered a house in the Malay quarter and unlocked an iron-bound trunk or chest that stood in the darkest corner of a small room.

A small fire was burning in the grate and diffused a certain degree of warmth throughout the place.

Among the things which the man of the tropics took from the chest was a small vial half-filled with a thick greenish liquid that moved but sluggishly when the little bottle was violently shaken.

Captain Asgeelo seated himself at the small table in the room, and placed alongside the vial a box which, when opened, displayed a lot of needles and little knives.

He opened the vial and drove one of the needles into the green liquid.

When he drew it out a tiny drop of the compound adhered to the point, but it gradually disappeared until it seemed to have been absorbed by the needle.

There was a singular expression on the Malay's face while he worked, and he did not put the vial aside till he had inserted the points of five needles into the emerald fluid.

After that, instead of replacing the needles in the box, he put them into a leather case which he carried in an inner pocket, and then both box and bottle were returned to the chest.

Nobody dropped in to disturb the captain while he worked, and satisfied with his task, he stood erect in the middle of the room and laughed.

"I throw the last card in a few hours!" exclaimed he. "Despite the ups and downs I've had in the game, I've kept the mark in view all the time. It is true that the annoying rats have slipped through my fingers, but I will have them again ere long, for the last time. My lieutenants will get their last instructions—the ones I have held back for an emergency. They will then be armed as man was never armed before in this city. I have made the American remember his oath. I have forced him to keep it. Aha! I'd like to see them circumvent Captain Asgeelo when he goes into the game determined to win the stakes. It can't be done. I succeed wherever I am, on sea or land. I am the Portuguese-Malay, hated by half the world, but I am still all-powerful!"

Just an hour later, a man pushing up Broadway in the crowd that lined it, had a small package placed in his hand.

He looked round to see who had touched him, and his eyes caught sight of a figure which drew a smile to his lips.

A little later another man, yellow of skin and with intensely-black eyes, felt something in his palm, and he looked down to behold a roll of leather which, when he investigated, was found to contain a shining steel needle set in a little handle of ivory with the point protected by a transparent shield that looked like gelatine.

Not long after this presentation, two other men received like rolls of leather in different parts of the city, and the person who placed them stood alone under the trees of one of the parks with a glow of triumph in his eyes.

"Now for the final victory!" he exclaimed, starting up suddenly. "I did not live among the dyak gentlemen for nothing; neither was I asleep while I sailed under the flag of the Palm-Leaf in the tropic seas."

It was Captain Asgeelo!

If he had gone up-town instead of plunging into the living sea surging up and down Broadway, he might have witnessed a scene to which we transport the reader.

Massena Branson occupied his chair in the darkened library of his elegant home. The hue of a dead man was on his face, and his most intimate acquaintances would have had to look a second time to have recognized him.

It was apparent, even in the dim light that fell about him, that the cunning work of his Malay foe had worked the change.

His hands shook as they manipulated the pen and paper before him.

For some time he wrote without looking up as

though he was compelled to finish his work in a given time.

He did not hear the door open nor see the beautiful eyes full of tears that looked in upon him for a minute and then silently vanished.

Bertha stole up-stairs and left her father alone.

When Branson had written diligently some time he threw the pen aside and fell back in the chair like a man exhausted.

"Why do this?" he asked himself in a husky voice. "Why leave any statement at all behind? It will only fix on Bertha the stain of having a foolish criminal father. I will not do that, neither will I survive the work of the serpent of the Malay lands."

He leaned forward as he finished, and taking up the sheet he had just covered with writing, read his work as follows:

"To the world:—

"The last statement of Massena Branson, broker, made in good health and with his mind properly balanced. In the year 1861 I was coming home from a voyage to the Old World with my wife and child, the present Bertha of my heart. In the Malaysian seas our vessel was surprised at night by a piratical craft commanded by the then terror of those waters, Captain Asgeelo. Being unarmed, we made no resistance, but fell into the Malay's hands like a ripe plum. Being the only American passenger on board accompanied by his family, I was treated with much consideration by the pirate, but all at once his temper changed, and I became the victim of his displeasure.

"Shortly after the capture I was taken to his cabin, where he made the most infamous proposition that ever fell from the lips of man. He offered me a choice between swearing that my daughter should become his wife on demand, and walking the plank with my child in my arms. I was thus thrown into an awful predicament. Could the cruelty of man go further than did Captain Asgeelo's on that occasion? I thought of my wife, in delicate health, of my child, a beautiful babe in her arms, and I remembered, too, that the careers of pirates are brief. Hoping that justice would speedily overtake the Malay and his crew, and in order to spare my wife any sorrow, I subscribed to the oath and was released.

"Years passed away. My wife died in ignorance of the awful compact, and my daughter grew to womanhood, the solace of my clouded life. I was happy till a few months ago. I thought that the sea had swallowed up the pirate of the tropics, but all at once his shadow fell across my path. Captain Asgeelo had come to claim his own. Not all the money I have could buy him off, and my prayers for him to spare us fell on a heart of stone. Bertha, with a fortitude I have never seen surpassed has, submitted. She sacrifices herself to keep dark the one error of my life. It is said that the man who took an oath in Captain Asgeelo's vessel afterward served under his flag. I did not do that. Some other person perhaps did. I never saw the Malay from the day I left his ship till he followed up one of his mysterious letters with his face.

"I shall leave this confession behind. May vengeance ere long overtake the serpent who has stung me to death, and may my child forgive her foolish father. In a few hours he will come for the sacrifice; the step of the man of the tropics will pollute my house; but I shall not look into his triumphant eyes nor listen to the voice I detest. The triumph of Captain Asgeelo is complete. He has killed two!

"MASSENA BRANSON."

The broker of Broad street read this paper with quivering lip.

He went through it like a person who suddenly finds his death-warrant, and he sat like a statue in the chair while he read.

When his hands moved they folded the paper, and placed it in one of the pigeon-holes of the desk before him.

After this, he wheeled his chair across the room and opened a small sideboard where none seemed to exist.

Taking a bottle from one of the shelves, Massena Branson went back to the desk and poured some of the wine into a small glass which he found there.

The wine was red, and emitted an appetizing odor.

Having done this, he took a vial from his pocket and let several drops of an almost colorless liquid mingle with the wine.

His hands did not tremble now; it seemed as though the reading of the paper had steadied them.

"If I had set a man on Captain Asgeelo's trail, it might have been different," he murmured. "But I was afraid to share the secret with a man, so I chose a boy; and what has he done? Nothing!"

At that moment the door behind the broker was opened, and a person bounded across the room.

Branson started and wheeled with a cry.

"Ah! you are here yet!" exclaimed the visitor, who was a girl with flushed cheeks and glowing eyes. "I have come to tell you that we have not failed—that Dodger Dick has

thrown the Malay into the hands of the police; but that is not all the good news!"

The girl, Madge Mystery, stopped suddenly, and fell back suddenly pale.

"What is the rest? Tell me!" cried the broker.

A strange, wild look shone from the girl shadow's eyes, and she reeled away before he could catch her and fell to the floor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPELL BROKEN.

It is one thing to promise victory, quite another to achieve it.

Dodger Dick's friend, the inspector, talked confidently of having Captain Asgeelo within an hour after the interview; but that time passed and more, too, and the man from the tropics was still at large.

The police had taken two men supposed to be the captain, but they turned out to be some one else, and thus much time was lost.

Meantime, Dodger Dick himself was not idle. He was a hunter on his own hook, and a certain quarter of the city was the bush which he was beating for his quarry.

There were several places where there was a probability of finding the Malay, and the man-hunters visited all, but without success.

"I don't say that your man has given us the slip," remarked the inspector to Dick, when they had met accidentally on a corner.

"He sha'n't escape me!" cried the young ferret. "I have not calculated on anything of that kind."

"Then you are looking for him too, eh?"

"I am busy in that direction. I shall try another place."

"Alone?"

"Yes. I will be within hailing distance of one of your men, if I find anything," and Dick left the officer and ran up the steps of an "L" depot.

Entering one of the cars, he took a seat unobtrusively in one corner.

The coach at the time was pretty full, and the boy ran his eye up one side and down another.

Suddenly his gaze became fixed on a man, who seemed to send a thrill through his frame.

He did not have to look twice at the passenger—he knew him too well for that.

It was Captain Asgeelo!

Did the Malay know that the boy had named him to the Philistines—that even then the hounds of the law were after him?

Was he aware of the fact that Mylo, his favorite spy—the keen and silent Mylo—had been caught, and was behind iron bars?

If the Malay did not know something of these things, why the slouched hat that fell over his black eyes, and why the garb Dick had never seen him wear before?

"The rogue of rogues sees me," thought Dick. "He seems to know that we are closing in on him like a net. There can be no mistake. Captain Asgeelo is playing a forced hand."

For some time Dick leaned back in his corner and covertly watched the man he wanted.

"We leave the car together," murmured the young detective. "The allotted time is drawing to a close. It is a run to the death now, captain."

Dick was right. Under the existing circumstances it could be nothing else.

As to the Malay he knew his young pursuer the moment he set eyes on him.

In fact, he discovered Dick a second before the boy ferret found him, and he had passed the interval with his eyes on his foe.

Dick was nearest the door, but he knew that he could not block the way long for the desperate man whom he wanted.

It was watch and counter-watch for some time during which the train whirled along over the trestled track.

All at once as it began to slow up to one of the stations Captain Asgeelo left his seat.

The following moment he came down the aisle toward the boy shadow.

"The tug of war has come," thought Dick.

"If the fellow escapes me now I lose the game for good."

"Fourteenth street!" called out the guard.

A number of passengers were already on their feet. Dick got up and stood elbowing the man from the South Seas.

Suddenly Captain Asgeelo leaned forward, and his eyes at the same time seemed to catch fire.

"If you dare!" he whispered at Dick's ear. "I carry death in my hands. Remember!"

The look that accompanied these words gave

them a terrible emphasis, but they were met with a glance of fearless defiance.

In a second Captain Asgeelo was beyond the door.

Dick saw him leave the coach.

"Now or never!" passed the boy's lips.

The next instant he had cleared the car himself and was after the Malay.

Across the depot platform he bounded, and in a twinkling had reached the steps.

Captain Asgeelo was already half-way down.

The boy spotter of Gotham had nobody between him and the broker's foe so he got the full benefit of the savage eyes that were turned suddenly on him as their owner stopped and looked back!

Below Captain Asgeelo the way seemed clear, but if he fled the young hunter would be at his heels.

It was an exciting moment in the Malay's life.

"Is the tiger coming back at me?" Dick asked himself. "Have we got to fight it out here?"

No! Captain Asgeelo turned toward the street once more, but near the foot of the steps he gave a sudden start which drew the young detective's attention to a man whom the Malay had noticed with alarm.

Dick could not suppress an exclamation of joy when he saw the man.

Captain Asgeelo seemed to notice his young tracker's delight.

"Captain Fox?" cried Dick leaning over the side of the stair.

The man on the sidewalk looked up.

He was one of the special men detailed by the inspector to keep a sharp lookout for Captain Asgeelo.

He knew Dick on sight, and for him to see him on the stair was to step quickly forward.

"That is the man you want," pursued the boy covering the Malay with his finger. "You have before you Captain Asgeelo."

Before all the words were out Captain Fox, alert, agile and strong had reached the stair.

Captain Asgeelo turned with a muttered oath upon Dodger Dick.

One of his hands fell from his breast as he did so, and the boy caught a sudden glitter of something too small for a pistol barrel or a dagger blade.

The boy Vidocq involuntarily drew back for at that moment the handwriting which the old shoemaker, Moszeelo, left on the wall flashed across his mind.

He thought about the poison of the dyaks!

"You go with me, rat of the sewers!" hissed the Malay. "If the game is out, so is your existence!"

But there was behind him a man who seemed to divine the yellow rascal's intentions.

The map of the tropics felt himself suddenly grasped from the rear and crowded against the side of the stair.

Dick sprang down to help the detective, but the Malay had found his match in agility and strength, and the grip of Captain Fox was all he needed to keep him quiet.

When Dick looked for the glittering object which he had seen in the Malay's hand, it was gone, and a brief search of the sidewalk failed to reveal it.

"I must tell Madge about the victory, then for Massena Branson and Bertha!" thought Dick, as the manacles snapped at the Malay's wrists.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE STRING.

It took the young detective some time to find Madge, but he found her at last.

He had more news for her than the arrest of Captain Asgeelo.

There had been a tragedy in a cell of the station, and the lieutenant in charge had made a startling discovery.

The man from the tropics, the cool gamester who had played for more than a young bride—for the broker's wealth was, after all, the true object before him—had tried to cheat the courts of justice of their own.

A few minutes before Dick found Madge, Captain Asgeelo had attempted to take his life with a needle, which was found on the floor of the cell.

"Go back to the Malay, and let me take the good news to Bertha!" exclaimed Madge, when Dick related what had occurred.

"Go, then," answered Dick. "And say to the broker for me that he is saved and the secret is safe."

We have seen how the girl shadow reached

Branson's house in time to prevent another crime, and how, with her message half told, she fell senseless to the floor.

It was believed for a while that Madge had been stricken with death, but she was revived to finish her story and to say that, when within a few yards of the house, a man jostled her and she felt, at the same time, a sting in her arm like the pricking of a needle!

It was this sting which sent a keen pain through her body, caused a sudden giddiness, and then made her reel from the broker's chair.

It was the poison of the dyaks!

When Dodger Dick presented himself at the house, now the abode of joy, he told how Captain Asgeelo had died at the station from the deadly poison of the steel needle, and he added, with a smile and a glance at Branson:

"He died without a word or a sign, and justice made his own hand avenge the murder of old Moszeelo and the crimes committed on the sea."

Madge went through a long and strange spell of illness from the effects of the needle, the poison of which had lost some of its strength in some manner, but she was nursed by Bertha, and the best medical skill of New York was at her service.

But one of Captain Asgeelo's four spies escaped—Maxar, who got wind of the blocking of the game in time to get away.

The others, Malo, Mylo and Muffet were sent to Sing Sing for conspiracy against life and property, and the three yellow slaves of Captain Asgeelo are there to-day.

As a matter of course, David Dallas was welcomed back to Bertha Branson's home, and with the spell of the Malay broken forever, the young couple's marriage speedily followed.

Massena Branson was willing to give Dick and Madge his entire fortune for their services, but they took only a modest portion of it, Dick declaring that his joy at saving Bertha from the clutches of the man of the tropics was reward enough for him.

He never played a better game, nor won a grander victory.

THE END.

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- 272 Minkskin Mike, the Boy Sharpshooter.
- 290 Little Foxfire, the Boy Spy.
- 300 The Sky Demon; or, Rainbolt, the Ranger.
- 334 Whip-King Joe, the Boy Ranchero.
- 409 Hercules; or, Dick, the Boy Ranger.
- 417 Webfoot Mose, the Tramp Detective.
- 422 Baby Sam, the Boy Giant of the Yellowstone.
- 444 Little Buckskin, the Young Prairie Centaur.
- 457 Wingedfoot Fred; or, Old Polar Saul.
- 463 Tamarac Tom, the Big Trapper Boy.
- 473 Old Tom Rattler, the Red River Epidemic.
- 482 Stonewall Bob, the Boy Trojan.
- 562 Blundering Basil, the Hermit Boy Trapper.

BY T. C. HARBAUGH.

- 23 Nick o' the Night; or, The Boy Spy of '76.
- 37 The Hidden Lodge; or, The Little Hunter.
- 47 Nightingale Nat; or, The Forest Captain.
- 64 Dandy Jack; or, The Outlaws of the Oregon Trail.
- 82 Kit Harefoot, the Wood-Hawk.
- 94 Midnight Jack; or, The Boy Trapper.
- 106 Old Frosty, the Guide; or, The White Queen.
- 123 Kiowa Charley, the White Mustang.
- 139 Judge Lynch, Jr.; or, The Boy Vigilante.
- 155 Gold Trigger, the Sport; or, The Girl Avenger.
- 169 Tornado Tom; or, Injun Jack From Red Core.
- 188 Ned Temple, the Border Boy.
- 198 Arkansas; or, The Queen of Fate's Revenge.
- 207 Navajo Nick, the Boy Gold Hunter.
- 215 Captain Quilley; or, Little Topknot's Crusade.
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- 241 Bill Bravo; or, The Roughs of the Rockies.
- 255 Captain Apollo, the King-Pin of Bowie.
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- 279 Old Winch; or, The Buckskin Desperadoes.
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- 316 Old Ellipse, Tramp Card of Arizona.
- 326 The Ten Pard; or, The Terror of Take-Notice.
- 336 Big Benson; or, The Queen of the Lasso.
- 345 Pitiless Matt; or, Red Thunderbolt's Secret.
- 354 Cool Sam and Pard; or, The Terrible Six.
- 366 Velvet Foot, the Indian Detective.
- 386 Captain Outlaw; or, The Buccaneer's Girl Foe.
- 396 Rough Rob; or, The Twin Champions of Blue Blazes.
- 411 The Silken Lasso; or, The Rose of Ranch Robin.
- 418 Felix Fox, the Boy Spotter.
- 425 Texas Tramp, the Border Rattler.
- 436 Phil Flash, the New York Fox.
- 445 The City Vampire; or, Red Rolfe's Pigeon.
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- 512 Dodger Dick, the Wharf-Spy Detective.
- 521 Dodger Dick's Best Dodge.
- 528 Fox and Falcon, the Bowery Shadows.
- 538 Dodger Dick, the Dock Ferret.
- 543 Dodger Dick's Double; or, The Rival Boy Detectives.
- 553 Dodger Dick's Desperate Case.
- 563 Dodger Dick, the Boy Vidocq.
- 573 The Two Shadows.
- 582 Dodger Dick's Drop.
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